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FOR THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER



APRIL, 1950 - VOL. XVI, No. 2
edited by PETER HUGH REED

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The American RECORD GUIDE



APRIL, 1950 - VOL. XVI, No. 8

formerly THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER



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April, 1950

A Dealer Speaks

Editorial Notes

A SHORT Time ago Albert J. Franck, a unique American record dealer for 20 years, decided to close his International Records Agency. Before he threw in the towel, though, he wrote the very last of his bulletins to explain his action.

This final testament, bearing a date line of February 1950, comprises 24 pages of amazing material. Largely written at random and about a huge variety of subjects pertaining to phonograph records, it should be of considerable interest to any serious record buyer in the land. It tells us, for example, about the enormous difficulties entailed in conducting a record business "on a level of decency and dignity above that of a schlock-shop operator," the uncertainties of record shipments, and the quality of the merchandise ordered and received. It is a withering piece of literature that does not mince words or pull punches; and if we did not know Franck intimately, we would think that he had turned sour on life.

What makes this bulletin worth the dollar that Franck asks for it, is the quantity of sound advice given on the many facets of record buying—for example, how anyone can import unusual and rare discs, how this can best be accomplished, what pitfalls to look for, etc. Franck, in addition (as in his other bulletins which he has published at random through the years), tells about many unusual and strange makes of records.

In the course of the bulletin, he moves easily from subject to subject; and, if one's eyesight can stand the strain of reading all of the fine print at one sitting, it is doubtful that anyone will find a dull moment in the piece. It took us several weeks to digest the treatise; because we found, as we have before, that fine print mighty fatiguing.

The Christmas before last, our friend Franck showed his wit and generosity by

investing in an expensive magnifying glass which he sent to us as a gift "to help in reading his bulletins." Perhaps, if we had been less busy in the past few weeks and had not mislaid Al's gift, we might have read the bulletin quicker and reported upon it earlier. However, using a magnifying glass has always been distasteful to us. It makes one aware of an age which one must accept whether one wishes to or not.

In this business one grows old from the beginning, if you know what we mean. At 30, for example, the accompanying headaches (to say nothing of the heartaches) can make one feel 50, and at 40—well, never mind. It is best for those on the outside sometimes never to see behind the scenes in the musical world, for the disillusionment might prove to great to bear.

Nevertheless, let us look over some of the problems of at least one reputable dealer during the past year or so. Some of these problems which we have shared will be parenthetically pointed out.

"Following my last, fortunately brief hospitalization," writes Franck, "I came to the conclusion that it would do me no harm if, for a change, I were to listen to some of the records I offer for sale." (Other would-be enterprising dealers might do this also).

A Trying Experience

"To say that I was shocked with what I experienced is putting it mildly. I played through dozens of sets and any number of singles. The results were disheartening. The tests were not confined to a single machine either . . . I found that roughly 70% of all the brand new 78 rpm [of one company] were positively wretched. They were off-center. They were full of thumps, bumps, and rattles . . . Among [another company's products] about 30% were bad. These suffered from eccentricity, swishing, ticking and excessive warping . . ."

In view of the fact that 78 rpm records are being offered throughout the country at discounts varying from 25% to 50%, it might be wise for the eager buyer to test the quality of the recordings he thinks are bargains at the price . . . If Franck is right and if what other dealers tell me is right, it is doubtful that many of the records being sold at a discount are worth even half of their original value. The old railroad sign—Stop, Look, and Listen—has saved many regrets. It might become an adage with today's prospective 78 rpm record buyers.

How closely Franck touches our heart when he says, "my mail continues to come in at the rate of over 8,000 pieces a year. I shall reply to as many as I can handle in accordance with their urgency, but many will, perforce, have to answer themselves. . . . [Harsh treatment this may seem, but sometimes many of us have to resort to it; not because we want to, but because the spirit cannot keep up with the flesh.] I am sorry, but where hardly one piece of mail in twenty is productive, I have to discriminate." [How many editors through the years have said these same words to us.]

A Tired Soul

"I am weary of the cynicism of the major producers of records," says Franck; and he then pokes a jab at the distributors, too. Cynicism has not, in your editor's opinion, been the characteristic with which we have prevailingly contended through the years; but rather the lack of knowledge on the part of record companies of the true value of their record products. "A big name is worth more than musical values!" But, as we have pointed out, the major record companies are big business and, whether we like it or not, big business is governed by commercialism.

Yet, in justice to the big companies, it would be well to refute an impression that is growing on all sides. Since LPs have taken hold, a lot of small companies have entered the field and produced some valued and also some atrocious recordings of unusual, out-of-the-beaten-track works of music. Seeing the unusual listed by a small firm, record buyers have begun to think that only the small firms are bringing out unusual and rare items. Such is not the case! The big companies have accomplished their share of rare and unusual works in recording. The trouble is, when a big company does something really unusual (something that has not great sales value) it is often obscured in the large lists, and therefore does not stand out like the rare items do in a smaller concern's output.

Let's return to Mr. Franck! He brings up a subject on which we can speak plenty. Says Franck: "Everything has gone to pot. The post office, for instance, takes seven days and up to haul a parcel from

(Continued on page 253)



Falstaff and the Page
(By Paul Konewka)

VERDI'S "FALSTAFF"

By Peter Hugh Reed

THAT fat, disreputable, old Knight, Sir John Falstaff, suddenly appears in three impersonations, all within the space of a month.

Cetra-Soria has issued a new recording of the complete opera introducing American listeners to the Falstaff of the young Italian baritone, Giuseppe Taddei, and Capitol Records has re-issued some excerpts (recorded by Telefunken before the war) that feature Mariano Stabile, one of the greatest modern Italian singing actors who has been closely identified with Falstaff for over thirty years. And, on the air (April 1st and 8th) Toscanini in his 83rd year has given radio listeners a performance of Verdi's last opera with the Metropolitan baritone Giuseppe Valdengo in the title role. Since the farce of the corpulent Falstaff and his love life has taken on such new significance in these entirely musical performances, it may be interesting to provide a little background for the three occasions.

When Shakespeare introduced his Falstaff in the two parts of "Henry IV," he had little idea of treating the character in a farcical manner. It is said that Queen Elizabeth, who like everyone else took the old Knight to her heart in the historical drama, requested a play from the Bard in which Falstaff would be entangled in

love episodes. This request supposedly caused Shakespeare to write "The Merry Wives of Windsor."

When Boito devised the libretto for Verdi's "Falstaff," he based it primarily on "The Merry Wives." He did use, however, certain selected passages from the second part of "Henry IV." Boito's free exercise of his rights in devising his libretto may have caused some Shakespearean authorities to see red, but one must admit that the famous Italian composer and librettist fashioned a play that served Verdi to write his greatest composition and to create in the opera's framework a character who dominates the attention in the best musico-dramatic tradition.

To appreciate the genius of Verdi in developing this character, we should return to the state of music drama at the time that the opera was written—1893. And, I can think of no one who has spoken more relevantly on this subject than Victor Maurel, the original Falstaff. Maurel was closely associated with the great roles of Falstaff and Iago, the interpretations of which he planned with Verdi.

"In order to interpret both comedy and drama in lyric form correctly," said Mau-

rel in 1895, "close and analytical study is indispensable, whether one impersonates the characters of Verdi or those of Wagner, though by both parties the intentions of the two great masters have been much exaggerated. The Italian contingent insists upon movement and spirited action as the essential conditions for a correct interpretation, without regard to the psychological nature of the personage enacted; while the German followers go to the other extreme, and laugh at what they are pleased to term the Italian marionettes, without perceiving that, in thus proscribing the elements so highly valued by their opponents, they fall into no less grave error of making the characters of Wagner puppets whose strings will not work.

"Personally I do not agree with those who consider Wagner's compositions as exclusively epic. By the side of his supernatural heroes and legendary knights of the Grail and the Round Table we find profoundly human creations. Telramund, in 'Lohengrin,' or Tannhauser, for example, are but everyday men of flesh and blood, alive with human passions. Why, then, should they not, in a strong dramatic situation, move and speak and act like men, rather than the cold impassibility of a demigod? It is true that, in general, Wagner makes his individual characters of less importance than the collective en-

semble, but the human element is never lacking in his works, though it does not occupy as important a place as in Verdi's compositions. With the Italian 'maestro' the individual forms the centerpiece of the group; he stands out clearly in bold relief and draws attention to himself as a psychological being rather than as a part or unit of a whole. This is a form of art which touches us more nearly, appealing to the impressionable side of our nature rather than the intellectual, and taking hold of the heart rather than the imagination.

"To sum it all up, Verdi and Wagner are two great geniuses; their object-perfection in art—is the same, though by entirely different methods do they strive for its attainment. It is not for me to decide which is the greater, but, as I have already said, if the power and superlative strength of Wagner's music appeals to the Teutonic mind, the brilliancy, vivacity and dramatic force of Verdi respond completely to the requirements of the Latin intellect.

"Verdi—of whom it has been said that 'nothing human is alien to him,' so broad and genial is the humanity that inspires his compositions—is the one modern musician who has caught the spirit of Shakespeare. . . In 'Otello' and 'Falstaff,' Verdi reached the summit of the achievement of Latin musicians, and this achievement is purely the result of Latin art, free from any foreign influence. . . For me no two roles have been more rewarding than Iago and Falstaff, the interpretations of which were planned closely with the composer.

"An audience should receive the force of a singer's performance as much through his singing as through his action and appearance. A role should receive its character as much from the artist's singing as it does from the music with which the composer has endowed it. That which always impresses and holds an audience captive is the truthfulness, the vigor, and the variety of expression and accent."

The importance of vigor, "variety of expression and accent" in the singing of Falstaff cannot be minimized. For this is the "truthfulness" by which the character will stand out "clearly in bold relief." A blind person in the audience could not fail to identify the character. Maurel avowedly placed genius above voice, and interpretation on a par with composition, yet he stressed vocal charac-



Victor Maurel as Falstaff

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terization. In the theater, the singing actor does not have to rely on his voice, but in a recording or a broadcast he should use the voice in the most persuasive and telling manner. His listeners are blind to his actions and appearance on the stage.

It is of utmost importance that vocal similarity be avoided in casting for recording and broadcast performances. In "Falstaff" the actor cast as Falstaff and the actor cast as Ford should be dissimilar in vocal quality. Otherwise, the listener may become confused identifying them, especially in the important Inn scene at the opening of Act II.

In the broadcast performance directed by Toscanini, Valdengo (Falstaff) and Guarrera (Ford) were too similar in vocal timbre for the comfort of the unfamiliar listener's identification of the two characters. This was proved by the constant inquiries of several neighbors, who came over to hear the April 1st broadcast on my equipment. Though they used a libretto, they were constantly asking who was Falstaff and who was Ford. And, I must admit, had I not been following the score I might not have been able to elucidate, for not all of the Italian phrases were easily caught. The latter is not intended as criticism of Valdengo's or Guarrera's projection of the language, but the result of not thinking in Italian. I might say that, to my way of thinking, Valdengo's voice seemed a bit light for the part, while Guarrera's was ideally suited to Ford.

Similarly, in the Capitol-Telefunken recording of the Inn scene Stabile and Poli can be confused. It can be observed that the majority of ardent operatic listeners in this country are not sufficiently familiar with the Italian language (or any other language, besides their own) to follow satisfactorily even a libretto. Without reference to the score, it is more often than not difficult to distinguish the separate lines of two singers whose tonal characteristic are lacking in contrast.

It is all of two decades since I heard Stabile portray Falstaff. Even then, his voice was not his major forte. His voice at 50 and, in the Telefunken records made nearly a decade later, was closer to a second tenor in quality than to a baritone of the character and quality associated with the role of Falstaff. His histrionic abilities were, on the other hand, supreme, and he dominated every scene in which



Giuseppe Taddei

he appeared. His artful manner of pointing up to the text, his sly innuendoes were amazing, and with Italian audiences he provoked many laughs that many baritones have failed to realize. I am reminded of Alec Robertson's review of his post-war (English Columbia) recordings of the two monologues—"L'onore, ladri!" and "Ehi! Taverniere" (disc LX1081). The discerning English critic remarked on the loss of quality in the baritone's voice, but assured us that the "magic of his characterization" gets across to the listener. Of that record, he said what can be said of the Telefunken issues—"a most vivid memento of a great performance. . . But in fairness to readers who have not had the good fortune to have seen the performance on the stage I must add that the voice itself has lost some of its quality in latter years and there is now an excessive vibrato. . . It is probable that a great deal of the magic of this characterization will get over to the listener. Such artistry can get across more than a row of footlights."

In the Capitol-Telefunken issues, the baritone's voice is steadier than in the later English Columbia disc. As a memento to a great artist, this re-issue is a very fine one, indeed. But more on this set later.

Taddei possesses a rich and opulent voice which is well suited to the role of Falstaff. It is a large voice which the young singer uses well. He can achieve a vigor of vocal line and "a variety of expression and accent" (unusual in modern Italian singers) and he has a true pianissimo. He realizes characterization with his voice and dominates a scene whenever present. One can believe that on the stage he is a talented actor from the evidence of this recording. This is borne out by De Sabata, who recently told a friend of mine that the young baritone is, "indeed, a good actor." This young artist communicates a believable portrayal of the corpulent Knight and the quality of his voice, despite his youth, fits the character. It is a voice that would unquestionably be heard to advantage in the roles of Scarpia and Rigoletto.

Except for Ford, no other characters in "Falstaff" require big names to assure success in a performance. The ladies of the caste should be chosen to achieve an agreeably sounding ensemble, for their most important contributions—outside of Dame Quickly and Nanette—are not prominently featured. Though the role of Alice (Mistress Ford) is an important one, she is given no truly significant solo work. In the old Columbia set, made nearly twenty years ago, the distaff side of the cast was vocally not always pleasing. In the important ensembles, they were shrill and blatant.

Pleasing Ladies

All of the women in the new set, if not distinguished as solo artists, have agreeable voices. Rosanna Carteri, as Alice, and Anna Canali, as Meg, are believable in their parts and vocally dependable. Amalia Pini, as Dame Quickly, is evidently a character actress of some attainments, for her portrayal of the role stands out in bold relief, and her scene with Falstaff in the Inn is a telling impersonation of a vicious, old lady. The masculine quality she projects on her entrance is in keeping with the character—a most effective coloring of her voice. Her vocal inflection in the word "Reverenza" has haunted me since first hearing it.

Saturno Meletti, as Ford, gives an earnest, virile performance. This talented baritone knows a great deal about characterization, for he proves himself as much at home in the part of Ford as he

was in the roles of David in "L'Amico Fritz" and Fra Melitone in "La Forza del Destino." He is a better Ford than Afro Poli, heard in the Stabile recordings. Listeners to the radio performance of Toscanini could not have failed to have been thrilled with Guarrera's portrayal of this part, but comparison between him and Meletti need not detain us. Suffice it to say, I found both eminently satisfactory.

The young lovers, portrayed by Emilio Renzi and Lina Pagluighi, are convincing. The former has a light, agreeable tenor voice, which he uses wisely. Pagluighi, well known to record buyers for her fine performance as Lucia, brings tonal sweetness to the music of Nanetta; but some of her intonation is not quite perfect. One gets the impression that she is not as happy in this role as in true coloratura parts though there are records available of her voice in lyric parts (notably some Mozart arias) in which she has sung much better than in this new recording.

Fine Orchestral Direction

Most gratifying is the orchestral direction of Mario Rossi, for his is an incisive and constantly alert performance. As in the case of Toscanini, one feels that his is the impelling spirit behind the performance. Comparison between the performances of the two conductors would be a matter for study side by side, and as it is unlikely that the Toscanini performance may materialize on records there is sufficient compensation in the matter of artistic direction to be obtained from the Cetra-Soria recording. For Rossi, while not achieving the consistent precision of line of Toscanini, brings gusto and broad humor to his performance. Too, the orchestra of the Italian Radio is a proficient and well disciplined ensemble, and the chorus is a competent one.

From the standpoint of reproduction, this new set has been excellently engineered. While the treble turn-over can be matched with the NAB curve of Columbia's LPs, the bass turnover is the European one and will therefore require for perfect balance a decrease in bass. Those having bass turn-overs will set their dial at 300 c.p.s. The balance between the voice and the orchestra is better handled than in most Italian opera recordings. We have some illusion of the opera house, for

(Continued on Page 280)



CHOPIN TO DATE

By Harold C. Schonberg

BACK in November, 1942, Kenneth Hieber wrote for this magazine a record summary of Chopin. Since that time there have, of course, been additional Chopin recordings, some good, some not so good. The fact seems to be that this is not an age that glories in Chopin pianists. Pachmann, Paderewski, Godowsky, Rosenthal, Friedman and the other post-Liszt giants no longer are with us. Rubinstein is around to carry on the tradition, when he feels like it, but how many more are there in this age of demon technicians who can go through a Prokofieff concerto like a marine sergeant through a bottle of beer but who are stumped by the "A major Prelude?" Petrie is no longer before the public. Brailowsky is alarmingly erratic. Barere, who has prodigious capabilities, cannot be depended upon, artistically, from one moment to the next. Novaes, another great Chopin pianist, has never been represented on records by more than trifles, although it is rumored that Vox will soon release her in the "Preludes" and "B flat minor Sonata." Cortot's playing days are about over, and in any case it is highly improbable that any American company would

want to feature him. No; there aren't many Chopin specialists around. Solomon and Curzon, both of whom are among the few contemporary pianists who have a feeling for the Chopin idiom, have never been recorded in America.

What it amounts to is that Mr. Hieber's selections, to a large extent, hold. He started his summary with the "Mazurkas" and pointed out the three-volume Rubinstein collection. Since then, Maryla Jonas has taken a fling at nine of them, and there has been a few single discs. Rubinstein still has no competition. Of the nine played by Jonas, only two are important works, the others being mostly salon pieces in line with her limited technique; and while she does have a certain sensitivity, she never leaves well enough alone, toying and fussing with the musical line. Mr. Hieber didn't mention the old (1931) Friedman collection, pretty obsolete as a recording, which contains some unusual examples of what was considered style around the turn of the century (which was where Friedman had his roots). Bad taste or not, though, there is immense authority in some of the playing. Horowitz not too long ago played the "F minor

Mazurka" (Op. 7, No. 3) with a rather unique combination of simplicity and nervous tension.

The "Nocturnes:" again Rubinstein, whose integral recording still remains the only one. Mention should be made of the Godowsky (1928) album of a dozen, which has some marvellously delicate and introspective playing quite removed from Rubinstein's healthy athleticism. There are hundreds of individual readings of the nocturnes, most of them old, hardly any remaining in American catalogues. The same holds true for the waltzes. Periodic recordings of the "C sharp minor" crop up, and Horowitz has recorded the "A minor" in his Chopin album. That is about all. Brailowsky's was the last complete recording, but I do not think it can compete with the more elegant Cortot version. Cortot's, too, was the last complete version of the three "Impromptus" and the "Fantasy-Impromptu" on an American label. (All recordings mentioned in this article, unless otherwise specified, are American releases; the European catalogues, much richer in Chopin, are a story in themselves). Brailowsky has recorded the "A flat Impromptu," in a rather brittle manner, and both he and Sandor have recorded the "Fantasy-Impromptu." Iturbi's version of the latter, though, is the best thing he has done since his concert days, and is to be preferred over all other recent ones.

The Preludes

Several pianists have made integral recordings of the "Preludes," among them Cortot, Kreutzer, Lortat, Moiseiwitsch, Petri and — most recently — Rubinstein. I have not heard the Moiseiwitsch or the Kreutzer (the latter is on Japanese Columbia). Lortat's is obsolete. Cortot's two albums, which I like better than any other interpretation, date from 1934 (Victor M-196) and 1926 (his first attempt; album M-20). If you ever have a chance to hear the near-acoustic M-20, listen to the magnificent playing of the opening "C major Prelude;" there never has been anything like it on records. The Petrie version is nowhere near a representative specimen of this fine artist, and Rubinstein does some very peculiar and flurried things in his set. Turning to the "Etudes," we find a complete Brailowsky version since Mr. Hieber wrote his article. It is better than the Columbia sets made by

Kilenyi, but to this taste comes far from approaching Cortot's Op. 10 album (1934). Brailowsky plows through the pieces in a grim, not too sensitive manner, with a remarkable lack of attention to dynamic or coloristic values. Among American single discs, there is a Byron Janis recording, neatly and objectively played, of Op. 10, Nos. 3 and 5 and Op. 25, No. 3. There also is an Iturbi disc, not too well realized, of the "Revolutionary Etude," and some exact but dry playing by Jakob Gimpel for Vox. Levant's "Black Key" and "Revolutionary," and his other Chopin attempts, do not warrant much discussion. Among the pre-war discs, Lhevinne's of the "Etude in Thirds," Horowitz's of Op. 10, No. 4 and de Pachmann's of Op. 10, No. 5 will always be collectors' items.

The Ballades

The only American recording of the "Ballades" since Mr. Hieber wrote are Horowitz in the G minor and Novaes in the A flat. Unfortunately the latter is inferior in quality of sound; and while the Horowitz record is rich enough, his neurotic, tortured playing is scarcely "echt-Chopin." Which again leaves the field to Cortot. It's a shame that, during the centennial year, a modern release of the "Ballades" should not have been forthcoming. Cortot is still supreme, too, in the great "F minor Fantasy", of which there has been only one American recording since 1934—that by Gyorgy Sandor, which does not quite measure up. Solomon's interpretation, on HMV, elegant and artful, still has a tendency to shrink in well-bred horror from the drama and turbulence of the piece.

Of the "Polonaises," Rubinstein's 1936 version still remains the only complete one. Since Mr. Hieber wrote, there has been a few recordings of the "A flat Polonaise," and one by Jonas of the early Op. 71, No. 2. Petrie and Horowitz on the A flat are the only ones of any importance. Horowitz has recorded, in ultra-brilliant manner, the "Andante Spianato and Polonaise," while Claudio Arrau and the Little Orchestra Society conducted by Thomas K. Scherman are responsible for the only version ever made with piano and orchestra — the work's original form. Rubinstein, back in 1933, made the one and only recording of the four "Scherzos" as a unit. Since then the only two Ameri-

can single discs — Barere, in 1936, of the "Third Scherzo," and Horowitz, in 1937, of the Fourth— have been issued. Not much of a showing for these great works. On the other hand, two recordings of the "B flat minor Sonata" were issued almost simultaneously in 1948. Rubinstein's, I feel, is much superior to Casadesu's: more forceful, more spacious, more idiosyncratic (if you will), and very much in the grand style. Brailowsky still remains the only exponent in America of the "B minor Sonata," unless Allegro has released its promised disc with Jacques Abram. The best version of this sonata, however, was played by Dinu Lipatti on English Columbia records, in 1946. Judging from his recordings, Lipatti appears to be a phenomenal young artist. It is rumored that he is a very sick man, which may prevent American appearances in the near future.

The Concertos

Concertos: two post-war recordings of the "F minor" (Rubinstein with Steinberg and the N.B.C. Symphony for Victor, and Malcuzyński with Kletzki and the Philharmonic Orchestra for Columbia) and one of the "E minor" (Brailowsky with Steinberg and the RCA Victor Orchestra). Both Brailowsky and Kilenyi (who made his in 1942) are outpaced by the old Rubinstein-Barbirolli set (1938), one of the finest ever made; and there are at least three good recordings of the "F minor" — the old Cortot (1936), the even older Rubinstein (1932), and the Malcuzyński (1948). I do not especially care for the new Rubinstein set: too much banging and glittering ostentation, and far too timid orchestral background. One other piano work should be mentioned: the "Krakowiak," recently given its first recording by Vox, with Rosl Schmid and the Munich Broadcasting Orchestra, conducted by Alfrons Dressel. (This recording is reviewed elsewhere in this issue. -Ed.) The music will be unfamiliar to most listeners, but anyone who likes the finale of the "E minor Concerto" will find the "Krakowiak" virtually the same flesh and blood.

The year 1949 saw four recordings of the "Cello Sonata," two of which were domestic, and two of which were foreign. The latter are performances by Amfiteatroff and Markevitch. In this country, Pi-

atgorsky's version was closely followed by Kurtz's. There is little to choose between them. Kurtz has a little the better of it in matters of balance between cello and piano, while Piatigorsky plays with more temperament.

These are the major Chopin recordings released in this country since 1942. In addition there are single discs of the "Barcarolle" (Rubinstein and Sandor), the Maryla Jonas miscellany, Piatigorsky's version of the cello "Introduction and Polonaise Brillante" (not as good as the old Feuermann), the Luboschutz-Nemenoff "Rondo in C" (better than the Bartlett-Robertson), and the "Berceuse" and "G flat Impromptu" (both fillers in Rubinstein concerto albums). The showing is not too good: nowhere near comparable to the amount of Chopin regularly released in England and France, where Solomon, Moiseiwitsch, Doyen and Malcuzyński are consistently featured.

By the way, if anybody would like to know the names of the pianists who, since records started to be made, have contributed most heavily to the Chopin repertoire, they are Backhaus, Brailowsky, Cortot, Dupont, Friedman, Godowsky, Hambourg, Koczalski, Kreutzer, Moiseiwitsch, de Pachmann, Paderewski, de Radwan, Rosenthal and Rubinstein. I derived this information browsing through the index of "L'Oeuvre de Frédéric Chopin," a complete Chopin discography of 253 pages, edited by Armand Panigel, with introduction and notes by Marcel Beaufrils. Published in November, 1949, this volume is the first of a UNESCO collection with the general title of "Archives de la Musique Enregistrée." It is a dazzling piece of scholarship, magnificently executed and carried through.

EDITORIAL NOTES

(Continued from page 246)

downtown New York to Brooklyn or the eight or nine miles to Richmond Hill."

Thanks to our many friendly readers, we are able to present to the postal authorities some facts about our own mailing. It took seven days for some readers in New York and Brooklyn to get their February copy of our magazine, which was mailed at Grand Central Post Office (the heart of the big city). It took Chicago

readers 14 days to get their copies, Milwaukee readers waited 51 days, and California readers got them in 12 and 13 days. A West Virginia reader got his copy ten days after mailing. These facts have been presented to the postal authorities and an explanation has been demanded.

In the meantime, we have revamped our mailing system and installed new addressing machines. By the May issue, we expect to be functioning in a better and easier manner, thus absolutely assuring our faithful readers the best service from our office. Thereafter, it is up to Uncle Sam! But, and this is an important "but," you might inquire of your local post office why delays in second class mail prevail. Delays can be at your end, as well as at ours.

The Worlds Encyclopedia

Mr. Franck has reminded us of the "The World's Encyclopedia of Recorded Music," compiled by Messrs. Geoffrey Cumings and Francis Clough. Compton Mackenzie, the editor of "The Gramophone," wrote about this project in his editorial in January. At the time we marked it as an important work to call to the attention of our readers. Says Mackenzie: "It is a work of consummate scholarship of which the design and documentation have been carefully planned to afford the reader the greatest facility in consultation." The publication is said to contain a compilation of "virtually all the classical records ever issued." Years ago, both Clough and Cumings corresponded with us at various times on their project. It will always be a source of deep regret that we were, because of prevailing duties, unable to assist them even in a small way.

Mackenzie tells us that this "magnum opus," which is "the fruit of 15 years of devoted labor, lies at the moment wondering whether it is to remain in manuscript or be made available to the world. No

publisher can risk the large sum of money he would have to lay aside to produce a work like this unless he were assured beforehand of financial support. The support required for a limited edition of 3,000 copies amounts to 7,500 pounds . . . In other words 3,000 subscribers willing to pay 50 shillings each for a copy of the Encyclopedia must come forward. He gives twice who gives quickly. A prompt response will enable the business of publication to be put in hand in time to have the volume ready for the Festival of Britain in 1951. Willing subscribers should notify the London editor [Cecil Pollard, The Gramophone], 49, Ebrington Road, Kenton Harrow, Middlesex (England)."

We hasten to assure Mr. Pollard that all on the staff of this magazine will subscribe for a copy. And, we beseech our readers to get busy and subscribe to this valuable record treatise. If you wish, you can drop your cards to us; and we will pass them on to Mr. Pollard. This is not an encyclopedia for the English alone, but one of world-wide interest. We are told that the Index alone is worth the price of the book.

This "magnus opus" aims to serve everyone, say its authors. "The keynote has been throughout to preserve the highest degree of musicological accuracy, while preserving the utmost lucidity and utility, not only to the musical scholar, but also to the ordinary music lover."

Surely, this is a project that the majority of us should support. Can we doubt that we will derive from such a treatise more than our money's worth?

Mackenzie tells us that a number of cultural corporation associations have been approached to sponsor this book, but "though all have expressed their admiration none have felt able to face the expense." The unknown fate of this book reminds us that in the past five years no less than a half dozen comprehensive catalogues of classical recordings, some dating from the first issues of records, have been brought to our attention. In several cases we endeavored to interest various publishers but, while admiration for the works were expressed, none would consider publication.

As the book of Clough and Cumings is considerably more than a glorified catalogue, we can only hope that our readers and readers of "The Gramophone," between them, can float this publication regardless of a publisher's help.

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RECORD NOTES AND

REVIEWS



BARTOK: Divertimento for Strings; **GESUALDO** (arr. Serly): Madrigal (Dulcissima mia vita); **SCARLATTI** (arr. Kramer): The Cat's Fugue (Sonata No. 30); **Tibor Serly** and his **String Orchestra**. Bartok Recording Studio LP disc brs-005, \$5.95.

BACK in the middle 'thirties some writers contended that Bartok's music paralleled Stravinsky's to an amazing degree. Certainly, the first movement of this wholly delightful work makes one instantly think of the Russian in one of his wittiest and most buoyant moods. Yet, Bartok's individuality is unmistakable and the string writing is not similar—only the mood. The movement is classical in pattern with some clever interplay between solo string quartet and tutti passages in concertante manner. The second movement could only have been conceived by Bartok. In it, we encounter the mystical side of his nature—the gentle poetic meditation that he knew so well how to conjure. The final rondo, "utilizing several delightful folk-like tunes," has an infectious gaiety and a sort of earthy quality. The whole work is delightful, fresh and stimulating. There is no offending dissonance for ears untuned to it, and I feel certain all will like it who hear it.

I must say it was a smart idea of Tibor Serly and A. Walter Kramer to conceive string arrangements of a Madrigal by Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa, and

the clever little sonatine of Scarlatti, known as "The Cat's Fugue." The expressiveness of the Italian Prince is not destroyed but heightened in this transcription. I doubt that any group of voices could do more justice to the sensual beauty of this love song than the strings do in this arrangement. And Kramer's transcription gives substance and strength to any early 18th-century keyboard piece. Good music does not necessarily suffer from such arrangements, though in the case of Gesualdo I think Serly tends to too much emphasis on occasion. The Scarlatti builds itself—it's that kind of a piece—and Serly's incisive treatment seems just right.

Serly has long specialized in performing the works of Bartok, who was a close friend of his for many years. His performance of the "Divertimento" has life and feeling and a true zestful flavoring of the music's content. The recording is excellent, though some crackling of surface in my review copy was disturbing.

—P.H.R.

BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67; **Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York**, conducted by **Bruno Walter**. Columbia LP disc ML-4297, \$4.95.

THIS is no mere replacement of Walter's 1942 performance (disc ML-4009) of this symphony with the same orchestra, for both interpretatively and reproductively it is a far more esteemable facsimile of the conductor's artistry. We have gone a long way since 1942 in the art of recording. Despite a weighty bass quality and a lack of textural clarity, the older Walter

performance rated as good reproduction at the time. Yet, it should be noted, we registered complaints against the monitoring, which made the climaxes less realistic than they should have been. The outstanding orchestral reproduction which Columbia has given us in the past year in Walter's performances of the Beethoven "Third" and "Ninth" and in the recent Beecham performances of Tchaikovsky's "Capriccio Italien" and the suite from Bizet's "Carmen," etc. is duplicated in this disc. On extended range equipment, it is a joy to hear the sound coming from this record, to note the clarity of line, the vividness of the tonal qualities, and the freedom from distortion in dynamics.

Apparently, Walter has reviewed his earlier performance with a discerning eye. To my ears, such would seem the case, for the noted conductor achieves a better rhythmic continuity and a greater dramatic eloquence than he did previously. He always had a gift for making his solo instruments sing and here it is better evidenced. One can understand why Walter would wish to play this work as the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra is today in better shape than it was in 1942. Walter's interpretation of this symphony follows the Viennese style, and his latest manifestation is more closely akin to Weingartner than to anyone else. It is a more individual performance than the recent Koussevitzky and every bit as well recorded. It is a reading with which one can live in daily contact more comfortably (if one so wishes), for while it does not storm the heights it is free from driving intensity and quite faithful to Beethoven's intentions.

—P.H.R.

BLOCH: Schelomo—Hebraic Rhapsody for Cello and Orchestra; **Zara Nelsova** (cello) with the **London Philharmonic Orchestra**, conducted by **Ernest Bloch**. London 10" LP disc LPS 138, \$3.85.

BLOCH ONCE SAID, "It is the Jewish soul that interests me, the complex, glowing, agitated soul that I feel vibrating throughout the Bible. . . ." Thus, we have the keynote to this extraordinary tonal poet, who has found and expressed in his music "the venerable emotion of the race that slumbers 'way down in my soul." Schelomo is the Jewish name for Solomon, and in this work the composer uses

the cello as the voice of Solomon, who sings of his glory, wisdom and disillusionments.

It is ten years since the late Emanuel Feuermann and Stokowski recorded this work. The difficult cello part was played by Feuermann with rare poise and tonal purity, the orchestral direction of Stokowski was tonally sumptuous and almost too insistently fervent. However, that recording is a valued memento of the superb artistry of Feuermann, whose richly virile and earnest cello tone made manifest, in an unforgettable way, the Bloch reincarnation of Solomon's voice singing of his glory, his love of life, and his hatred of the vanity of mankind.

Zara Nelsova is a gifted player, whose artistry is more lyrically impassioned than Feuermann. There is some suggestion of a world-weariness in this unfolding of the voice of Solomon. Bloch dedicated this work to the cellist Alexander Barjansky, whom he met in Switzerland. A wax stature by Catherine Barjanska, the cellist's wife, of Solomon inspired the composition. Olin Downes has described the statue thusly: "A long bearded figure sits on the throne clad in royal robes that cover the lower part of the body. The face is very old and weary, with deep sunken eyes, hollow cheeks and protruding temples. It is the King weary of life, weary of riches, weary of power." Perhaps the voice of Solomon was planned by Bloch for a more lyrical treatment than some give it in performance, and the choice of the solo player in this recording may have been made for that reason among others. Perhaps the thoughts of the King are more passionate and violent than his discourse, and these are intended to be conveyed in the orchestral glamor.

Bloch treats his orchestra more lyrically than Stokowski—the rhapsody is ever the song. There is greater clarity of instrumentation and line in this new recording though the playing of the London Philharmonic is not on a par with the Philadelphia Orchestra. But the fine qualities of the recording keep the music soaring, freer in spirit than in the older version. While I would not wish to part with the older set, this new recording revives an interest in a composition that I have not played for a long time, and I be-

New music for April—on "45"

This month's diversified Red Seal release is available on conventional recordings, too—and includes a magnificent selection of music appropriate for the Easter season.

SIR THOMAS BEECHAM, BART.

On Hearing The First Cuckoo In Spring—Delius. Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Single record.

ERNA BERGER

Martern Aller Arten (Die Entführung aus dem Serail, Act II)—Mozart. Philharmonia Orchestra, Josef Krips, Conductor. Single record.

ENRICO CARUSO

Sacred Songs For The Holy Year: Agnus Dei—Bizet; Pietà Signore—Stradella; Requiem: Ingemisco—Verdi; Messe Solennelle: Domine Deus—Rossini; Stabat Mater: Cujus Animam—Rossini; and Crucifix (with Marcel Journet)—Fauré. Album of three records. (78 rpm only)

ARTHUR FIEDLER

Boston Commandery March—T. M. Carter; Our Director March—F. E. Bigelow. Boston Pops Orchestra. Single record.

DOROTHY KIRSTEN

Depuis Le Jour—Charpentier; Obéissons, Quand Leur Voix Appelle—Massenet. RCA Victor Orchestra, Jean Paul Marel, Cond. Single record.

PIERRE LUBOSHUTZ and GENIA NEMENOFF

Saramouche (Suite for Two Pianos): Vif, Modéré, Brasileira—Milhaud. Single record.

JOHN MCCORMACK

Irish Songs by John McCormack: Rose of Tralee; Ireland, Mother Ireland; Meeting of the Waters; By the Short Cut to the Rosses; O Mary Dear; and The Harp That Once Thro' Tara's Halls. Album of three records. (78 rpm only)

JAMES MELTON

Great Religious Songs By James Melton: The Lord's Prayer—Malotte; Ave Maria—Mascagni; Agnus Dei—Bizet; Panis Angelicus—Franck; The Palms—Fauré; and Ave Maria—Bach-Gounod. RCA Victor Orchestra and Chorus, Frank Black, Conductor. Album of three records.

YEHUDI MENUHIN

Sonata For Violin Solo—Bartók. Album of three records.

ROBERT MERRILL

Operatic Arias By Robert Merrill: Prologue: Si Può? Si Può? (I Pagliacci); Il Balen Del Suo Sorriso (Il Trovatore); Eri Tu (A Masked Ball); Cor-tigiani, Vil Razza Dannata (Rigoletto); Il Cavallo Scalpita (Cavalleria Rusticana); and Credo In Un Dio Crudel (Otello). RCA Victor Orchestra, Arthur Fiedler, Conductor. Album of three records.

JAN PEERCE

The Holy City—Adams-Weatherly; Bless This House—Brahe-Taylor. RCA Victor Orchestra, Warner Bass, Conductor. Single record.

ARTHUR RUBINSTEIN

Concerto No. 4, in G, Op. 58—Beethoven. Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Sir Thomas Beecham, Bart., Conductor. Album of four records.

ROBERT SHAW

Songs For Male Chorus: An Den Frühling, Widerspruch, La Pastorella, Ständchen, Sehnsucht. RCA Victor Choral of Men's Voices, Frank Glazer at the piano. Album of three records.

LEOPOLD STOKOWSKI

Symphony No. 53, in D ("The Imperial")—Haydn. Symphony Orchestra. Album of two records.

BLANCHE THEROM

Vocalise—Ravel; Charmant Oiseau—David. William Hughes at the piano. Single record.

ARTURO TOSCANINI

Divertimento No. 15, in B-Flat, K. 287, For Strings and Two Horns—Mozart. NBC Symphony Orchestra. Album of four records.

Symphony No. 101, in D ("Clock")—Haydn. Final side in this album: Scherzo from "A Midsummer Night's Dream"—Mendelssohn. NBC Symphony Orchestra. Album of four records.

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lieve that Bloch's treatment of his score has a freshness and light which will endure. I recall the words of my late friend, Paul Rosenfeld, who in summing Bloch's artistry once said: Bloch's "lyrical cast of expression makes it a generous source of refreshment and of benefaction in this arid time." Though those words were uttered a decade and half ago, they can be repeated meaningfully today. —P.H.R.

BRAHMS: Symphony No. 2 in D major. Opus 73; **Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra** conducted by **Willelm Mengelberg**. Capitol-Telefunken LP disc P8070, price \$4.85.

THERE HAVE BEEN any number of recordings of this symphony, none of them completely satisfactory. The conductor whose interpretation comes the closest to my conception of the work, namely Papa Monteu, did not have a first-rate orchestra, yet his album (Victor M-1065) is one of the more successful. Of the more recent releases, Furtwaengler's reading (London EDA-89) is very mannered, tempi and dynamics willfully distorted in an extraordinary manner. At the opposite pole is a set (HMV Z7004/7) by Fritz Busch and the Danish State Radio Orchestra, which is so modest and middle-of-road that the confident assertiveness which is an important part of the Brahmsian character is almost completely lost.

Mengelberg, surprisingly enough, is quite straightforward on this LP disc. His orchestra has a rather hard quality, as though they had been driven through a number of rehearsals without much rest. The Dutch conductor's interpretative plan is sound enough; he makes his points in an obvious, practical manner, without any particular fuss or feathers. In other words, while the performance can not be termed exhilarating or definitive, it is satisfactory, without obvious fault. I have an idea, however, that LP collectors in general will be happier with the Rodzinski-N. Y. Philharmonic disc, which, in spite of a negative personality at the helm, features better playing and better recording.

The Mengelberg disc is clear enough for practical musical purposes, but can hardly be compared with recent examples of recording technique. As I said before, the tone quality is hard and unfriendly, without the warm glow that is so essential in Brahms. —A. W. P.

BRUCKNER: Symphony No. 7 in E major; **Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra**, conducted by **Eugene Jochum**. Capitol-Telefunken LP discs P8067/68, \$9.70.

THIS IS Bruckner's best known and most often performed symphony. It contains one of the greatest slow movements ever written. At the opening of this long opus, Bruckner conceived one of the finest and most noble themes to be found in any German symphony, but a lack of cohesion in the development of the movement soon defeats the power of that initial soaring thematic splendor. As Olin Downes once said: "Bruckner prophesies like John of Patmos—and suddenly loses the thread of his discourse." Despite the composer's long-windedness, encountered again in the finale, this is a great symphony, deserving of the approbation of such famous conductors as Toscanini, Furtwaengler, Ormany, Schurlicht, etc., all of whom have shown an especial affection for it.

The old Ormandy performance was an appreciable one, but unfortunately he did not use the "Urtext" (uncut) version. This one is. Jochum takes the work at an unusually slow tempi and tends to romanticize Bruckner as well as to exaggerate the drama and to treat Bruckner's Orchestration as though it were Wagner's. The most ardent Brucknerites I know, with the exception of H. C. Ronald Landon—who wrote an article on the composer which appeared in our June 1946 issue, disparage Jochum's performances of the Bruckner symphonies. Landon, contended on the other hand, that Jochum's performance of this symphony might well become the preferred one, "once this recording was made available to Brucknerites." Inasmuch as Wagnerisms abound in the score, I think Jochum is not remiss in exploiting them. To be sure, he does not give us a comparably moving traversal of the wonderful slow movement like Furtwaengler has done (the only section the latter has recorded) but he gives us an equally expressive one to that of Ormandy.

The recording accomplished in a large empty hall is over-resonant in the loud passages with some accompanying distortion. The dubbing, however, has been handled very well indeed. —P.H.R.

HAYDN: Symphony No. 53 in D-Major ("The Imperial"); **Leopold Stokowski and his Symphony Orchestra.** RCA Victor 45 rpm set WDM-1352, two discs, \$2.20.

HAYDN: Symphony No. 103 in E Flat Major ("The Drum Roll"); **London Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by **George Solti.** London 10" LP disc, LP-124, \$3.85.

THE works of Haydn must surely have reached a high water mark in popularity among phonograph record consumers. In the last half year, not a month has gone by without the release of at least two of his major works.

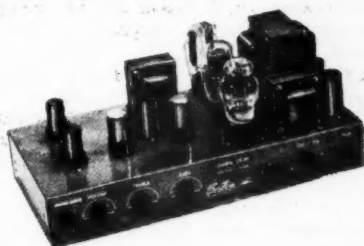
This month is no exception. From RCA Victor we have a slightly muddy recording of Stokowski's surprisingly straightforward reading of the recently discovered Symphony No. 43, and from London a moderately well played performance of the great Symphony No. 103.

"The Imperial," now available for the first time in a domestic catalog, was written around 1773 while Haydn was with the Esterhazys. It was composed, presumably, to commemorate a visit that Empress Maria Theresa paid to the Esterhazy court. This work, like so many others Haydn wrote during that period, later got lost and was not heard again until Edward Fendler, a German conductor, tracked down and assimilated all of the scattered fragments of the score. Fendler gave his first performance of the work with the Paris Conservatory Orchestra in 1939.

The Symphony No. 53, a four movement work, is only of moderate musical interest. The melodic material is graceful but a shade poor in quality. The harmonic an contrapuntal invention is assured but never striking. This symphony, an occasional piece, appears to me one that Haydn dashed off when he had very little on his mind to write about.

"The Drum Roll" is a different matter. One of the richest products of Haydn's last years, this symphony is full of wit, grace, humanity, and all kinds of musical surprises that continually astonish and delight the listener.

Except for the last movement, Georg Solti's conducting lacks the clarity of rhythm and sharpness of phraseology that are so essential to a completely effective statements of the work. In spite of the blessings of LP and the acoustical properties of Kingsway Hall (where this excellent recording was accomplished), I think I would prefer the Heward perform-



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ance (Columbia set MM-547) to the Solti. The Heward set, I hasten to add, though a good recording, is scarcely a complete delight. —C. J. L.

HAYDN: Symphony No. 94 in G ("Surprise"), and Symphony No. 100 in G ("Military"); **Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra**, conducted by **Sir Malcolm Sargent** and **Hugo Rignold**. Columbia LP disc ML4276, price \$4.85.

▲ After last month's excellent pairing of the "Oxford" and "Clock" symphonies (Columbia LP ML4268) these performances are a distinct disappointment. It would have been very fitting to have two of the most popular of Haydn's Salomon series tastefully performed by an English orchestra, as they were originally written for English audiences. One could condone the indifferent playing of the Liverpool instrumentalists if the two conductors involved had contributed any degree of incisiveness to the proceedings. One is used, by now, to the conservative, methodical Sargent, but that he should be outdone by Rignold, his successor as permanent conductor of the Liverpool forces, is a surfeit of mediocrity.

Such questionable matters as Sargent's lethargic tempi in the first and last movements and Rignold's conception of the slow movement of his assignment as a gavotte-like dance are better left undetailed. For an excellent version of the "Surprise" try Schmidt-Isserstedt's reading on Capitol-Telefunken. The old Victor set of the "Military" by Walter and the Vienna Philharmonic is still very satisfactory.

—A. W. P.

MOZART: Symphony No. 41 in C, K. 551 (Jupiter); **The London Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Josef Krips**. London LP disc LPS 86, price \$4.85.

▲ Here is a straightforward, middle-of-the-road reading of a standard classic that should not annoy any one and will probably please a great many, especially those who prefer to let the music speak for itself without the ministration of an interpretative spellbinder. If Krips does not reach any great emotional heights, he at least sets forth the score in an orderly manner that does credit to his good taste and musicianship.

Few there are if any who would claim that the London Symphony is a ranking symphonic organisation. In this case, however, they have no overwhelming technical problems to solve, the balance is clean, the tone quality pleasantly mellow. The

engineering is on a par with recent London efforts, which is to say first-rate. Let the collector of interpretations take his business elsewhere; this disc is for Mozart fans.

—A. W. P.

SCHOENBERG: Pelleas and Melisande (Symphonic Poem after the drama by Maeterlinck); **The Symphony Orchestra of Radio-Frankfurt**, conducted by **Winfred Zillig**. Capitol-Telefunken LP disc P-8069, \$4.85.

MUSIC festivals were held in many German cities during the summer of 1949 to help celebrate Schoenberg's 75th birthday. The present orchestra directed by Zillig, a former Schoenberg pupil, participated. Though the recording does not quite suggest 1949, it may have resulted from a festival performance. To judge from this disc's sound, the recording was accomplished in a radio studio; there is little tonal reverberation suggesting a concert hall.

Schoenberg was 25 (1899) when he wrote "Verklaerte Nacht." Four years later he wrote "Pelleas and Melisande." A more ambitious score than the former and a more mature work than his "Gurre-Lieder" (1901), this symphonic poem is a more ambitiously orchestrated and contrapuntally textured. It suggests an effort to go Richard Strauss one better. From the outset, the work is gloomy, almost foreboding, and dramatically agonized. Had Richard Dehmelt, whose poem inspired "Verklaerte Nacht," written a drama on Pelleas and Melisande, the music of Schoenberg would probably have been more logically related to it that it is to the Maeterlinck play.

Perhaps we are too familiar with Debussy's setting, which after half a century seems inseparable from the Maeterlinck drama. The French composer evokes a mood which breathes life into Maeterlinck's dreamy puppets. He knew that Maeterlinck's play was impressionistic not realistic. Schoenberg's music, on the other hand, is expressionistic. It has always seemed strange that Maeterlinck disliked Debussy's music drama. Perhaps his reaction was a similar case to the parent that met himself face to face in an unrecognizable expression in his child.

Schoenberg definitely places Maeterlinck's characters in the German orbit and cloaks his imagery with a morbid, romantic embroidery. Like "Verklaerte Nacht" and "Gurre-Lieder" the spirit of Wagner

is not far removed, and leitmotifs, associated with the characters, are employed in the manner of the Bayreuth master.

This is not music to dismiss lightly on first hearing nor frown upon, because it does not follow a similar pattern like Debussy. It is the work of a more brutal personality. I can imagine one becoming very sorry for oneself, as well as with Pelleas and Melisande, while listening to this symphonic poem. The masterful manner in which Schoenberg handles the orchestra, the complicated transitions of his thematic material, ask for a study of the score, and anyone who reads a score should find a fascination in this music. It will clarify a great deal which on first hearing may seem diffuse. —P.H.R.



LISZT: Piano Concerto No. 1 in E flat. R. Schmid (piano) and the Munich Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra, conducted by H. Rosband. **STRAUSS: Burlesque.** G. Muench (piano) and the Munich Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra conducted by A. Dressel. Vox LP disc PL-6110, price \$5.95.

▲ This coupling is the first of several discs that Vox is bringing out with the Munich Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra. Of the participants here, Rosband is remembered for some pre-war discs, and Dressel will be known to many. R. Schmid (her first name is Rosl), though, has been an unknown American factor; so has G. Muench (a cousin, reportedly, of the conductor).

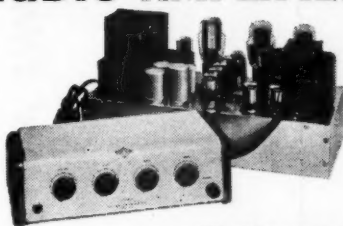
The best side of this disc is the Strauss **Burlesque**, a rattling good performance. Muench does not have much competition in the work, as far as recorded versions go. The Elly Noy set is sadly outdated, and Arrau's more recent effort was emotionally too reticent for the music, despite the well-drilled fingers Arrau brought to it. Muench may not be the technician that Arrau is but his sympathy for the music seems to be greater. He plays it with all the unabashed sentimentalism the score requires, with plenty of color and broad phrasing. I found the recording entirely satisfactory. It was not as sharp as some domestic pressings, but it had mellowness and sufficient strength on the high end.

There was little of the piano waver that mars most similar recordings.

A slight degree of waver, though, was noticeable in the Liszt concerto, which otherwise turns out to be a good routine performance. Miss Schmid plays with thorough competence, avoiding melodrama and hysterical outbursts. As such, her performance may be called tasteful, and there are many listeners who prefer this type of approach. Myself, I feel that a couple of well-placed shots of technical adrenalin are needed to make this war-horse pick up his tired old legs a little faster.

—H.C.S.

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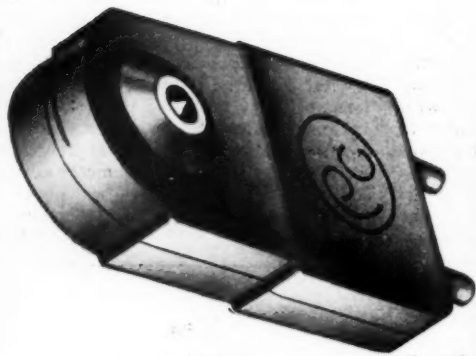
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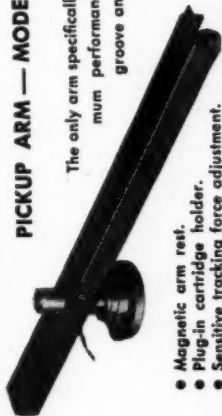
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VILLA-LOBOS: Piano Concerto; **Ellen Ballon** (piano) with **Orchestre de la Suisse Romande**, conducted by **Ernest Ansermet**. London LP disc LLP-77, \$5.95.

VILLA-LOBOS like Respighi, has the gift of camouflaging meagre musical material with sumptuous orchestral scoring. On first hearing, sounds—purely for sounds' sake—are apt to intrigue the listener with this work; but in the long run one may find this unsatisfactory. This sort of thing can appeal to those who love orchestral coloration, exploited with virtuosic effects. This is one of London's earliest LPs, which is not handed out to reviewers because it does not represent the best LP technique of the company. However despite the low level of recording, which will provoke surface sounds on many machines, the quality of the orchestral and piano sound is consistently good and many will probably want this first piano concerto of the noted Brazilian composer, written especially for the talented Canadian pianist, Ellen Ballon.

The eulogistic notes lead us to expect a great deal more than we get. For example, we are told that the concerto is extraordinarily unified. Unity in form follows a definite pattern which is not found here. The work turns out to be a hybrid, by turns neo-classical, romantic and modern in form and texture. The first movement and the scherzo are interlinked in an unconvincing exploitation of the sonata form. The slow section, a passacaglia, is fascinating with its instrumental and harmonic patterns, but the virtuosic and lengthy cadenza at the end is disrupting to the beauty of its opening mood. The finale, with its Brazilian rhythms, has its early fascination but builds to a raucous ending. In summation, you get your money's worth in sound effects, and if you like such works as the Khachaturian piano concerto you will probably enjoy this one.

Miss Ballon has the technique to do justice to this music and Ansermet has the knowledge and skill to get the utmost in sound and effect from the orchestra. Too bad the recording was not at a higher level.
—P.H.R.

SCHUMAN: Konzertstück in G (Op. 92). Edvard Erdman (piano) and Munich Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra conducted by Gustav Goerlich. **CHOPIN: Krakoviak (Op. 14).** R. Schmid (piano) and Munich Broadcasting Symphony

Orchestra conducted by Alfons Dressel. Vox 10-inch LP disc PL-1700, price \$4.85.

NEITHER of these works have ever been previously recorded. The **Krakoviak** is an early Chopin composition, the **Konzertstück** (also known as the **(Introduction and Allegro Appassionato)** a relatively late one by Schuman. Most biographers of the latter composer are apt to overlook this work, and word has gotten around that it is inferior. It isn't. There are weak and redundant moments, true, but the spirit of Schuman is there—the eternal romanticist, the appealing melodist. In some respects this might be called a pianistic counterpart of the violin concerto. Which will damn it in some eyes and elevate it in others. I am very happy to see the work on records. The performance is faithful. Erdman, who is unknown to me, is not the most imaginative of pianists but has the typical German thoroughness in execution. He plays like a first-class kapellmeister: a little stern, a little unyielding, always exact, determined to give each note its proper value. The tonal qualities of the recording are good.

As for the **Krakoviak**—a **krakoviak** is a Polish dance in two-four meter—it is a charming, high-spirited piece of music. If you like the piano concertos you will adore this. The young Chopin had a good time writing this tailor-made work to his own considerable pianistic specifications. It bubbles, it fizzles, it occasionally weeps a few sentimental tears, and it keeps on moving. Miss Schmid's performance here is much more convincing than her Liszt was. She demonstrates a supple touch that is ideal for the figurations, and she has a superb rhythmic sense. A few cuts have been taken, though these are nothing but repetitive passages. The recording of the piano tone is excellent—hardly any waver, amid good balance with orchestra. In any case, recording considerations are secondary, because there is little likelihood of either piece being pressed by the domestic companies.
—H.C.S.

WEBER: Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in C major, Op. 11; L. Schmidmeier (piano) and the **Munich Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra**, conducted by **G. Goerlich**, and **WEBER: Quintet for Clarinet and Strings in B flat, Op. 34; A. Buerkner** (clarinet) and the **String Quartet of Radio Munich.** Vox LP disc PL6140, price \$5.95.

HERE is an LP disc that should be especially appealing to those of us who are ever on the search for some new aural fare outside the limits of the standard concert repertoire.

I have never heard this piano concerto in concert nor seen it listed in local programs, yet as a refreshing change from the overworked Schumann, Grieg and Tchaikovsky scores it is a welcome relief. There is nothing markedly subtle about the work. Weber, as a performing instrumentalist first and composer second, often wooed his audience with flashy effects that the cerebral composer, enclosed in his ivory tower, might have eschewed.

This concerto in style and emotional appeal has a certain kinship with the Saint-Saëns "C minor." It is not quite so redolent of the tanbark (I am very fond of the Saint-Saëns "C minor," just the same), but then Weber preceded the Frenchman by a good many years; in fact, as Harold Schonberg points out in the accompanying notes, Weber was the first of the romantic composers.

Herr Schmidmeier is a competent soloist. He plays as though he enjoyed his work and appreciated the alert support of his colleagues. There is some distortion in the recording of the piano tone, but not enough to cause serious annoyance. The recording as a whole is clear and bright.

Good, meaty scores for solo clarinet are not overabundant. Brahms, Bliss and Mozart have contributed distinguished quintets to the literature which are played with fair regularity. The Weber quintet, for some unfathomable reason, has no such popularity and is rarely played. I suspect that availability of score and parts may be an important contributing factor. We often forget that instrumentalists (and singers, too) are at the mercy of the publishers. Many scores they would like to perform are absolutely unavailable, as libraries will not photostat music that is copyrighted, even though it be out of print.

Weber liked the clarinet and wrote well for it. One of his good friends was the celebrated clarinet virtuoso Baermann, for whom he wrote two concertos, the familiar "Concertino," and this "Quintet." The score is a complete delight, filled with delicious, free-flowing melodic tidbits. There is nothing of the precious, the sentimental, or the mawkish. All is noble, dignified, yet light-hearted. To put it mildly, I am very much in favor of this piece.

April, 1950

Herr Buerkner is a clarinetist of the top rank. He doesn't need to tip his hat to any of the celebrated soloists, and that includes the elegant Mr. Kell. The German player is more forthright, more human. His phrasing is a miracle of stylistic purity without the sophisticated over-refinement of the Englishman. The assisting string quartet is most helpful, the engineering first-rate.

To drive my point home, this disc is worthy of your attention. Do not overlook it.
—A.W.P.



BARTOK: Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion; William Masselos, Maro Ajemian (pianos), Saul Goodman (tympani and first percussion), Abraham Marcus (xylophone and second percussion). Dial LP disc No. 1, \$5.85.

THREE ASPECTS of Bartok's genius are united in this work—his powerful urgency, his poetic mysticism, and his graciousness and wit. The annotator for this recording, Sidney Finkelstein, writes sympathetically and understandingly of the composer and his music. His description of the three movements is succinct and helpfully elucidating. Mr. Finkelstein's admiration and understanding of Bartok's music has prompted us to commission him to write an article on the composer.

The present work, written in 1937, was destined to become three years later, a concerto for two pianos and orchestral accompaniment. The composer has said this score "seemed advisable, for certain technical reasons, . . . though, as a matter

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of fact, it gives only color to certain portions of the work." Both arrangements have their fascination, but the present one seems to me best for true phonographic enjoyment. Its sharper etched characteristics make it particularly effective in recording, especially when reproduced so splendidly as it is here. There is another version of this work (issued by Vox), performed by Bartok and his wife and taken, I believe, at an earlier date from a radio broadcast in Europe. Though a valued memento of the composer, it disappoints as a recording, and without entering into comparative artistry, let me say Masselos and Ajemian are equally appreciative players, evidencing a thorough knowledge of and for the idiom of the music, and Goodman and Marcus are proficient performers.

Of the many works of Bartok, which I have heard through the years, none has quite fascinated and thrilled me as much as this one. It gives a sort of field day to the percussive instruments and makes us realize their significance. The percussion instruments employed are three tympani, xylophone, side drum with snares, side drum without snares, cymbal suspended, pair of cymbals, bass drum, triangle and tam-tam.

Discussions pro and con in the old days brings back to mind (in relation to this work) some remarks by my friend Paul Rosenfeld, whom I have seen fit to quote elsewhere this month. Rosenfeld said Bartok's "problem lies in maintaining a very difficult balance. An Asiatic, he has to maintain himself upon the European bank; to bring a vast, chaotic, formless past within himself up to the single European moment; and with his roots earth-fast in the soil become the bright hard instant today." But does he ever really uproot himself, as Rosenfeld once felt? I think not. In this work the primitive force is manifest in the opening move-

ment, it is apparent in the slow movement, despite "the veiled harmonies" recalling Debussy, and surely the wit of the finale still retains its far-flung folklike qualities, the source of which are more Oriental than European.

This is a chamber work of power and intimacy. It is a work as rare as it is original in its genre. I hope that the many rather than the few will grow to know and appreciate it.

—P.H.R.

BARTOK: Sonata for Violin solo; **Yehudi Menuhin** (violin). RCA Victor 45 rpm set WDM-1350, 3 discs,

THIS unaccompanied violin sonata was of the last of Bartok's creations. Composed in 1944 for Yehudi Menuhin, the work was followed by the "Third Piano Concerto" and the unfinished "Viola Concerto" (just recently completed by Tibor Serly).

The Sonata is an unusually complex work that makes great demands on the performing artist. Divided into four sections—tempo di ciaccona, fuga, melodia, and presto—it is a manifestation of Bartok's mature powers of rhythmic and harmonic invention and his gift for vastly varied tonal coloration. For this listener, however, its expression is obscure. Such a lengthy work for a solo instrument (it runs nearly 25 minutes) needs a clear expressive profile if it is to leave the listener with a sense of fulfillment. Despite its elaborate musical texture, the Sonata is, for me, something of an ambitious failure.

Menuhin's performance is truly inspired, and for this reason there will be many who will want this particular set. The recording, accomplished in England, is, I suspect, merely an adequate dubbing. These records seem to lack the tonal richness that one associates with Menuhin's best playing and H.M.V.'s present-day recording techniques.

—C. J. L.

BERG: Lyric Suite; Pro Arte Quartet. Dial LP record No. 5, \$5.95.

BERG'S "LYRIC SUITE" has become a modern classic. Once regarded as a formidable and abstruse work, it has become a cherished product of the so-called twelve-tone technique. It has always seemed to me unfortunate that Berg did not live longer, to achieve further remarkable works in the pattern of his teacher, Arnold Schoenberg. For Berg's music is more gratifyingly emotional, more accessible and more rewarding. While essentially the German romantic with some of the morbid characteristics of his famous

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Perhaps the most exciting discovery this column has made concerns the familiar G-E reluctance magnetic cartridge G.E., it seems, has issued as many as three types of styli already in its continuing efforts to meet the vital tracking problems. The latest type... is astonishingly better...

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teacher, Berg was less decadent, less brutal and not given to voicing the same obvious self-pity.

The idiom employed in this work may be strange to those unfamiliar with the twelve-tone technique, but as it does not disguise its emotional impetus, it rather heightens it, the work has great appeal. I have known listeners who were completely opposed to this music on first hearing, but who being sensible people accepted my word as to its appealing qualities and replayed the work several times. Some after the second hearing were impressed, others found it necessary to replay it three or four times. Most in the end came to like the music, and afterwards found themselves completely absorbed in it. Undeniably, those who read scores discover an earlier appreciation, as the intricate polyphonic writing is clarified better for the ear by the eye.

The work is divided into six movements. The fast movements increase in speed, while the slow ones decrease. The climax of the music is reached in the fourth movement, "Adagio appassionato," the most complex section of the score. The concluding "Largo desolato," declamatory and rhapsodic in expression, is emotionally heightened by the quasi-delirious presto which precedes it. As though to stamp the romantic quality of the work, there is brief reference in the music to Wagner's "Tristan" and at the end the violins and cellos leave off one by one and the music fades out in a decending phrase for the viola.

In our October 1948 issue, we reviewed a repressing of the old Galimir Quartet performance of this work, made originally in 1937. As fine as that earlier version was, this one tops it in all ways. For modern recording serves the players to the best advantage, and there is more varied coloring and better dynamics. Rudolph Kolisch, first violinist of the Pro Arte Quartet, worked with Berg on the technical problems involved in composing the "Lyric Suite" and gave its first performance in 1927, and "in fact the next 100-odd performances." The sensitivity of expression and the virtuosity demanded in the interpretation of this score are realized with fine musical insight and expression by Kolisch and his fellow musicians. Dial has given them first-rate recording. —P.H.R.

HAYDN: Divertimento No. 6 in D major; Divertimento No. 82 in C major;

Davis Shuman Trio (Davis Shuman, trombone, Maxine Johnson, viola, Bernard Greenhouse, cello). Paradox 10" LP disc PL-10002, \$4.85.

THAT A CONCERN by the name of Paradox issues these mildly diverting pieces in recording seems suitable. For here we have a paradoxical revision in instrumentation. Haydn wrote these trios for the obsolete instrument, the baryton, with viola and cello. Prince Esterhazy was an enthusiastic devotee of the baryton, which historians tell us was a relative of the viola da gamba. Its complicated string arrangement, which made tuning laborious, prompted contemporary critics to call it an "ungrateful instrument" (Burney). No stringed instrument of today, with the possible exception of the double bass, can substitute for the baryton, but according to some three wind instruments can be employed in its place, the French horn, bassoon, or trombone. Mr. Shuman, trombone teacher and a well known performer, takes advantage of the latter substitution, and gives us an opportunity to access that instrument in a chamber music ensemble.

Mr. Shuman being a proficient performer proves his point well taken. I cannot imagine another instrument at the moment serving this music to better advantage. Moreover, his trio enlists the services of two capable and knowing musicians on the strings. Haydn undoubtedly wrote these little works as "Gebrauchsmusik" (utility music for informal diversion). I find them agreeable listening. Each has three movements, an opening slow section, a minuet and a fast section. The annotator points out that Haydn appropriately subtitled the querulous trio in the minuet of the "C major" as "Des alte Weib" (The Old Woman). The trombone certainly fits the occasion appropriately. Good recording. —P.H.R.

SCHOENBERG: Third Quartet, Op. 30; Pro Arte Quartet. Dial LP disc No. 4, \$5.95.

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG'S Third Quartet is a landmark in the history of atonal composition. Written in 1926, it was the first string quartet that made full use of the twelve tone technique.

Long freed of any adherence to key relationship, Schoenberg, at this point in his career, was using his methods of composition with exceptional freedom and mastery. He had not yet rebelled against

traditional procedures regarding rhythm and formal layout.

During this period, Schoenberg produced works of striking ingenuity and power that, in this writer's opinion, he has never since equalled. Directing his remarkable gifts of rhythmic fancy and contrapuntal tension into classical forms, Schoenberg seemed to throw his outstanding powers into bolder relief than when he later chose to turn his back on all formal discipline.

The Third Quartet is a traditional four movement work. The forceful first movement (Moderato) is composed in sonata-form and is particularly memorable for the agitated drive of a rhythmic ostinato that is always present. The Adagio section comprises a theme and some vastly detailed variations that communicate a strange sadness. The third movement (Intermezzo) is in the form of a Scherzo, and the final section is a Rondo of disarmingly simple proportions.

The Pro Arte Quartet, now in residence at the University of Wisconsin, gives an acceptable performance except for a few slips in intonation. The recording and surfaces Dial has provided are exemplary.

—C.J.L.

Victor's First LP List

THOUGH WE WOULD like to discuss the merits of all of RCA Victor's initial 25 releases, unfortunately, this company declined to send us more than three of the 25 issues. Being interested, and desiring a few LPs to replace 45s and 78s, we went out and bought another half dozen and also took the trouble to hear a few others at a friendly dealer's.

Upon hearing at first RCA Victor's latest record, we were immediately aware that a change in bass characteristics, over those employed in 45s and 78, existed. With bass controls set at 500 (where the division between constant frequency and constant amplitude occurs in most domestic recordings) we found we had too much bass. At the turnover point of 300, the one employed by most European recordings we found the reproduction better balanced with more than sufficient bass. One technician of our acquaintance thinks a turnover as low as 250 has been used. However, it is our belief that all, we have heard, sound satisfactory at the 300 turnover.

Whether this was an arbitrary procedure on Victor engineers' part, or the April, 1950

results of several tests to procure a good LP recording remains a mystery to this date. Let it be said Victor's LPs were no trial and error, for all we have heard with controls correctly set have proved excel-

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lent in their reproduction. We have been told that Victor engineers worked six months or more on their LP reproduction and that four or five experimental recordings were made and discarded before acceptance of the final product.

Though the balance in these new recordings is excellent with the upper controls set at the same RCA curve found in the 45s and 78s, some sound even better with the highs wide open. The record Victor has developed is a silent surfaced one.

If the bass is not properly compensated, Victor's LPs can sound distorted. We had occasion to hear them on a friend's machine, whose source for LP reproduction was a Columbia player. Unmatched characteristics of recording made the **Koussevitzky** performances of Ravel's "Bolero" and "Ma mere l'oye" sound unnatural. The former in the latter section of the disc was a shambles. This was not true on our own equipment. Whether all of the Victor LPs sound similarly distorted on the Columbia player, with its higher bass turn-over, remains a moot question. It is truly lamentable that standardization among record companies cannot be effected. Both Columbia and Victor have excellent LP recordings, if correctly compensated, a fact which those of us who have installed a record compensator know only too well.

Anxious to hear various solo instruments, as well as some fine orchestral and vocal reproduction, we obtained a group of the new LPs more with the idea of providing our readers with a report on their relative merits rather than with the idea of pleasing our own musical tastes. Accordingly, we bought the **Rubinstein-Golschmann** performance of the **Rachmaninoff** "Concerto in C minor" (disc LM-1005). This proved excellently dubbed to LP with no wavering in the piano tone. The **Kapell-Koussevitzky** performance of the **Kachaturian** piano concerto (disc LM-1006) turned out to be a better job on 33 than on 45 or 78. And **Stokowski's** now famous recording of Music from the Ballet "The Sleeping Beauty" (disc LM-1010) is, in our estimation, another magnificent job. It is one of the finest LP reproductions of orchestral music extant.

The **Stokowski** performance of **Dvorak's** "New World" Symphony (disc LM-1013) is every bit as good as the 78 and 45 versions, especially with the highs wide open. And, **Toscanini's** traversal of "The Grand Canyon Suite" (disc LM-1004) is also an

outstanding LP. **Toscanini's** performances of the **Tchaikovsky** "Romeo and Juliet" and excerpts from **Berlioz's** "Romeo and Juliet" Symphony (on disc LM-1019) are not, on the other hand, as realistically recorded though both sound well in reproduction. The difference in volume levels between sides 2 and 3 of the 78 version of the **Berlioz** music has been rectified in the LP recording.

It is strange what an uninterrupted, LP performance will do by way of altering one's opinion of some music. For example, we did not take to the "Husitska Overture" of **Dvorak** in the 78 version, but somehow its LP pressing found us deriving much pleasure from the music, for the mood was sustained not broken at a vital point. In the LP record (LM-1) the coupling is the **Fiedler** version of **Smetana's** "Moldau." The clean reproduction and the playing of this music is far ahead of the Walter version.

The **Monteux** performance of **Rimsky-Korsakoff's** "Sheherazade" (LM-1002) is by no means a high frequency job, but it sounds well from the 33 pressing. One of the best things that the French conductor and the not-always-reliable **San Francisco Symphony** has done for us, this interpretation of the work has long been admired and has not been challenged except in the 78 presentation by the Swiss conductor, **Ernest Ansermet**, whose LP version was a keen disappointment.

In the final scene of **Wagner's** "Siegfried," featuring **Eileen Farrell** as Bruennhilde, the soprano's lovely voice is heard to best advantage from the LP disc (LM-1000). And, the set of excerpts from **Bizet's** "Carmen" (LM-10007), featuring **Gladys Swarthout**, **Ramon Vinay**, etc., proves a welcome addition to our LP Library.



BRAHMS: Variations on a Theme Of Haydn, Op. 56b; **Arthur Whittemore** and **Jack Lowe** (duo-pianists. Victor set WDM 1347, two 7" discs, \$2.20.

THE LAST WORD can be the best, as in the case of this opus which **Brahms** orchestrated a year after he composed the original duet for two pianos. In no other orchestral work has **Brahms** maintained

such high qualities in instrumentation. The two-piano version takes on the characteristics of an etching made from a glowing painting and one, knowing intimately, the orchestral version of this work finds it hard to believe that the two piano version was not an after-thought rather than a first composition.

Whittemore and Lowe give us an objective performance which sadly lacks tonal variety and nuance. But it can be said that neither Bartlett and Robertson nor Luboshutz and Nemenoff accomplished performances that were really better in these respects. The most polished rendition was that of Bartlett and Robertson, but their refinement of style leaves me with the feeling of no especial conviction for the music. The work just does not come to life for me on two pianos, even when the recording is as strikingly realistic as it is here. Maybe it would be well if pianists would forget its existence just as they seem to have forgotten the existence of Brahms's later two-piano arrangement of his quintet, Op. 34.

—P.H.R.

DEBUSSY: Pour le piano; Estampes; Claudio Arrau, pianist. Columbia 10" LP ML2086, \$3.85.

THAT Claudio Arrau is a master of his instrument has long been known to musicians and the musical lay public. His entire success, I believe, founded on his physical mastery and his rather charming flamboyant temperament. These considerable attributes have all but obscured for his public his stylistic deficiencies.

Arrau appears to have a mania for playing a large group of compositions in the standard repertory (always excepting those pieces that frankly display or dramatize their difficulties) in a way that violates the known sense of them.

In the "Estampes," for example, Arrau's phraseology, while moderately engaging as efficient piano-playing, seems to me to be the wrong kind for playing these works. And his rhythm in the wonderfully imaginative "Pagodes" and the "Soiree dans Grenade" bears none of the characteristics usually associated with the Javanese piano, or Spanish rhythms Debussy employed in these works. In "Pour le piano," neo-classical pieces evoking the style of Couperin, Arrau uses rubato in a way that destroys the continuity of at least the Sarabande.

My surprise over Arrau's recent praiseworthy recording of the "Waldstein" So-

rata, in which he followed Beethoven's directions with almost unflinching attentiveness, was evidently well founded. This is the Arrau I have come to know — a technical master but an unsatisfying communicator of musical expression.

—C.J.L.

MILHAUD: Scaramouche (Suite for Two Pianos); Pierre Luboshutz and Genia Nemenoff (duo-pianists). Victor 7" disc 42-1839, 95c.

▲ This two-piano suite is a clever and amusing musical portrait of that stock character in 17th-century Italian farce, whose boasting and cowardice prompted beatings by Harlequin. Perhaps Milhaud had a specific program but, if he did, I am unfamiliar with it. The present players turn in a fine performance, which aided by better recording, takes precedence over the older Bartlett-Robertson one.

—J.N.

PROKOFIEFF: Sonata No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 28; and Suggestion Diabolique, Op. 4, No. 4. **SCRIABIN:** Etude No. 11 in B Flat Minor, Op. 8; and Nocturne for Left Hand Alone, Op. 9, No. 2. Sigi Weissenberg (piano). Columbia 10" LP ML-2099, \$3.85.

▲ Sigi Weissenberg is a highly efficient young pianist; make no mistakes about that. In his recording debut, he gives effective, accurate performances of two mildly engaging works of Prokofieff and two examples of Scriabin's watered-down Chopin.

Columbia's recording is not as good as it ought to have been. There is a slight trace of waver and the overall sound of the piano is alternately just a little tinny, just a little muddy.

—C. J. L.

SCRIABIN: Sonata No. 4 in F sharp, Op. 30; William Schatzkamer (piano). Victor 7" disc 49-070, 95c.

THE **SCRIABIN CULT** find in the composer's music a mystical message which I cannot say exists for me. Scriabin's youthful admiration for Chopin is apparent in his early works, and despite

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the independence in the realm of harmony which later manifested itself the spirit of Chopin did not completely forsake him. In the present work, which is not a sonata in the accepted sense, we think of Chopin while admiring the harmonic individuality of the composer. This is undoubtedly Scriabin's most admired sonata. It was written at white heat with some other 39 pieces, including the "Symphony No. 3" or "Divine Poem", during the summer of 1903. Of the finale of the symphony, he said: "For the first time I found 'light' in music, found this rapture, this soaring flight, this suffocation from joy..." Some of the composer's disciples profess to find in the final pages of this sonata "glaring, radiant light, such as had never been couched in sounds before" (Sic).

The late Katherine Heyman played this sonata better than anyone else I have ever heard. She freely employed the middle pedal, at the composer's suggestion, in performing all his works, and in the case of this sonata the effect created a diffusion of the harmony and a smoother rhythmic continuity. Neither Vladimir Drosdoff (Paraclete disc 10) nor Schatzkammer achieve a similar rhythmic smoothness, the latter tends to be jerky, though his conception of the piece follows in Miss Heyman's wake in that he wisely does not play the second movement at too rapid a tempo. Miss Heyman contended that Scriabin said that its tempo was a matter of mood rather than speed. The recording is realistic but the piano tone tends to brittleness. It is, however, a far finer job than the Paraclete recording. —P.H.R.



CHARPENTIER: Louis—Depuis le jour; and **MASSNET:** Manon—Obeissons, quand leur voix appelle; **Dorothy Kirsten** (soprano) with **RCA Victor Orchestra**, conducted by **Jean Paul Morel**. Victor 7" disc 49-0840, 95c.

▲ Only a short time ago, we had a recording of Steber's "Depuis le jour." It was tonally lovely but conveyed little of Louise's soaring ecstasy. Miss Kirsten sings the aria with more conviction and intensity, though her French is not as convincing as it might be. Of all the recordings of this aria, none appeal to me as much as the Ninon Vallin version. Both the

voice and the style are irrefutably French. But Miss Kirsten has intelligence and a lovely, well trained voice, which she knows how to use. Her singing of Manon's "Gavotte" has élan and the right objectivity. Mr. Morel provides competent orchestral accompaniments and the recording is excellent. —J.N.

DEBUSSY: La Chevelure from "Trois Chansons de Bilitis"; and **HAHN:** Si mes vers avaient des ailes; **Nan Merri-man** (mezzo-soprano) with **Ralph Linsley** at the piano. Victor 7" disc 49-0823, 95c.

▲ What beautiful singing Miss Merri-man contrives in this disc! We forget for the moment that others have sung these songs and sit back and enjoy her artistry. She colors her voice effectively in both airs, but while she sings the overly familiar Hahn song expressively her interpretation seems a bit studied in the second verse.

The late Oscar Thompson said of the Debussy song: "The most passionate and the most human in its appeal of the Bilitis set. In a warm flood of sensuous charm, Fan tells Bilitis of his dream. . . I had your locks, like a black necklace, around my neck and over my breast. I caressed them and they were mine and we were tied forever thus. . ." There are two previous, rewarding recordings of this song, by Maggie Teyte with Alfred Cortot at the piano (Victor disc 1771) and by Jane Bathori with Suzanne Gyr at the piano (French Columbia disc D-13086). To these should be added this record by Miss Merri-man, which for its ingenuousness, intelligence, and warmth recalls the inimitable artistry of Bathori. The piano accompaniments are handled with artistic discretion by Mr. Linsley, and the recording does justice to both performers. (The labels were unfortunately reversed on the disc sent us.) —P.H.R.

GREAT RELIGIOUS SONGS: The Lord's Prayer (Malotte); Ave Maria (Mascagni); Agnus Dei (Bizet); Panis Angelicus (Franck); The Palms (Faure); Ave Maria (Gounod); **James Melton** (tenor) with **RCA Victor Orchestra and Chorus**, conducted by **Frank Black**. Victor set WDM-1365, three discs, \$3.35.

ADAMS: The Holy City; and **BRAHRE:** Bless This House; **Jan Peerce** (tenor) with **RCA Victor Orchestra**, conducted

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by **Warren Bass**. Victor 7" disc 49-0838, 95c.

LEHAR: The Merry Widow—Vilia; and **RUBENSTEIN**: If You Were There (based on "Romance") (from the M-G-M film "The Sun Comes Up"); **Jeanette MacDonald** (soprano) with orchestra, conducted by **Robert Armbruster**. Victor 7" disc 49-0773, 95c.

ROMBERG: The Student Prince—Deep In my Heart, Dear; and **BROWN**: A Night at the Opera—Alone; **Allan Jones** (tenor) with orchestra, conducted by **Robert Armbruster**. Victor 7" disc 49-0617, 95c.

GOULD: Arms and the Girl—A Cow, and a Plough, and a Frau; and **ROBINSON**: Carry Me Back to the Lone Prairie; **James Melton** (tenor) with orchestra, conducted by **David Broekman**. Victor 7" disc 49-0961, 95c.

▲ These are all recordings designed for the mass of so-called music lovers who do not discriminate in performance but are swayed by personalities. The title on the "Easter" album by Melton is a misnomer, for some of the selections are far from great though widely popular. "Favorite Religious Songs" would have been better. This album presentation stems from radio and is a little too obvious for its own good. Peerce revives "The Holy City" for Easter and he does justice to the old ballad. Miss MacDonald communicates little to me in either selection, and I can do without the Rubinstein. Allan Jones is a tasteful singer, nothing sensational but pleasing with good English diction. A lot of people will find pleasure in Melton's singing of two Westerns—he has flair for things like these. It seems hardly necessary to say that Victor has provided all with first-rate recording. —J.N.

OPERATIC ARIAS: I Pagliacci—Prologi (**Leoncavallo**); Il Trovatore — Il balen (**Verdi**); Un Ballo in Maschera—Eri tu (**Verdi**); Rigoletto—Cortigiani, vil razza dannata (**Verdi**); Cavalleria Rusticana—Il cavallo scalpita (**Mascagni**); Otello — Credo (**Verdi**); **Robert Merrill** (baritone) with **RCA Victor Orchestra**, conducted by **Arthur Fiedler**. Victor set WDM-1351, three 7" discs, \$3.35.

▲ These are the finest operatic selections that Merrill has made to date. Here, we find a stylistic assurance and some splendid singing. The young baritone is not

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yet a master of expressive variety or knowledgeable accent to point up drama, and in such arias as "Eri tu," "Cortigiani, vil razza," and Iago's "Credo" he is more the master of a fine voice than of the art of the singing actor. There is much pleasure to be had, however, from such singing, which is consistently rich toned, smooth and appealing.

Why Fiedler has not been enaged to conduct operatic selections before this is scarcely understandable. This ever reliable conductor gives Merrill fine orchestral backgrounds, firm and assured. The recording is excellent. It was accomplished, I believe, in the same hall that Stokowski and his Orchestra record.

—J.N.

MOZART: Die Entführung aus dem Serail—Maerten aller arten; **Erna Berger** (soprano) with **Philharmonic Orchestra**, conducted by **Josef Krips**. Victor 7" disc 49-0931, 95c.

▲ Now that Victor has signed Erna Berger, this long overdue record issued in England in May 1948 is released. It should have been brought out earlier. Few sopranos of today can cope with this aria's exacting tessitura and difficulties. Berger sings it on the whole with admirable style. I have preferred her version since acquiring it from England to those by Steber and Pons. However, my favorite recording is the one made nearly 20 years ago by the Czech soprano, Felicie Hüni-Mihacsek, whose voice had more body and tonal fullness and at the same time the requisite vocal agility. As there are rumors that the valued recordings of Hüni-Mihacsek may be repressed in the near future, I mention her as readers may wish to watch for this advent. Krips' orchestral performance lacks essential grace but it is forthright and on the whole clean. I am sure a lot of listeners will get much pleasure from this disc. The 45 recording is not quite as clear as my original 78 H.M.V. disc.

J.N.

RAVEL: Shéhérazade; **Jennie Tourel** (mezzo-soprano) with the **Columbia Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Leonard Bernstein**. **MOUSSORGSKY:** Songs and Dances of Death; **Jennie Tourel** and **Leonard Bernstein** (piano). Columbia LP ML-4289, \$4.85.

WHAT a splendid disc this is! It contains Ravel's touching and beautiful settings of three of Tristan Klingsor's verses and Moussorgsky's powerful "Songs

and Dances of Death" excellently performed by Tourel, Bernstein, and the Columbia Symphony Orchestra.

One of the outstanding events of the past musical season in New York for this listener was a Tourel concert that included the Moussorgsky songs. To have those deeply affecting pieces available on an LP and sung with such style, vocal beauty, and clarity of expression is cause for rejoicing.

If the "Shéhérazade" is not quite as memorable as the London version by Susanne Danco and Ernest Ansermet, it is nevertheless a performance that is worth owning and one that no one should miss hearing. While Tourel does not have the tonal purity that helps Danco convey the wide-eyed, wistful desire of the young girl who wanted to see Asia's sights, she certainly has everything else. As for Bernstein: if he fails to get the balance of orchestral weights that is Ansermet's private miracle, he does everything else one could ask for.

All this a top-notch recording from Columbia's engineers and the inclusion of English translations of the Songs on the folder makes this disc one that I want especially to recommend.

—C. J. L.

RAVEL: Vocalise (Pièce en forme de Habanera); and **DAVID:** Le Perle du Brésil—Charmant oiseau; **Blanche Thebom** (mezzo-soprano) with **William Hughes** at the piano. Victor 7" disc 49-0843, 95c.

▲ There is sweetness and charm in Miss Thebom's singing of the David air, though transposed to a lower key it loses in brilliancy and some may miss the flute at the end. The singer has the requisite flexibility of line and musical taste to justify her use of this composition as a concert offering. She is also heard to advantage in the Ravel "Vocalise," where she colors her tones effectively. Mr. Hughes, whose piano is realistically recorded, supplies excellent accompaniments. The reproduction is satisfying.

—J.N.

SCHUBERT: Schwanengesang (14 songs); **Ralph Herbert** (baritone) with **Frederic Waldman** (piano). Allegro set AL 16, two 10" LP discs in container, \$7.70.

WOLF: Fussreise; In der Frühe; Lied eines Verliebten; Gesang Weylas; Der Tambour; Nachtzauber; Der Musikant; Verschwiegene Liebe; Hiemweh; **Cran**

Calder (baritone) with Marion Carley (piano). Allegro AL 24, LP disc, \$3.85.

CHORAL MUSIC OF FRANCE: Qui s'y frotte s'y pique (Lassus); Ave Maria (Mouton); Vaudeville (Janvier 1712) (Couperin); Coeurs desolez (Josquin Des Pres); Au joli jeux (Jannequin); Trois Chansons d'Orléans (Debussy); Nicolette; Trois beaux oiseaux de paradis (Ravel); Pro Musica Choral Society, conducted by Crane Calder. Allegro AL 17, 10" LP disc, \$3.85.

SCHUBERT'S "SCHWANENGESANG" (not to be confused with a short song of his by the same title) is a cycle by courtesy only — it just happened that its fourteen songs, to poems by Rellstab, Heine and Seidl, were found among his effects after he was dead, and so they were given a general title and published. This, however, is certainly no argument against singing the otherwise unconnected lieder as a group, for their moods assort well together and they add up to something rather than just so many Schubert songs. The set contains several very popular numbers which have been done nearly to death by themselves in the concert hall, in the parlor and on records — "Am Meer," "Aufenthalt," "Der Doppelgänger" and the long time favorite "Ständchen" — but there are several others which are almost never heard except as part of the cycle, which is reason enough for performing it. There used to be a complete recording available on importation, sung by the baritone Hans Duhan (HMV ER 292-95, ES 460) but I imagine the demand for it was never great. It is good to have the songs again, sung honestly, if with no transfiguring imagination, with a voice that is pleasant and controlled, if we discount a few of the high tones. The recording is a bit heavy and thick in quality.

Mr. Calder's Wolf set brings us "Lied eines Verliebten," a first recording, and "Nachtzauber" which we have had only in English translation (Columbia History of Music, Vol. 4, M-324). Here again is a serious and tasteful singer with a good serviceable voice but hardly a rival for the best of the artists who have recorded the other songs in other years. Mr. Calder's German diction is clear, but less genuine than Mr. Herbert's. The recording balance, too, is less good, the piano tone lacking in depth and richness.

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As a conductor Mr. Calder tackles music of a very different stamp, and once again we must be grateful to him for his enterprise. But we must confess that the results are only partially successful; for though the quality of the voices is good, they are not too well integrated as a group, and I suspect that there is not a Frenchman among them. At any rate the performances are rather angular. The reproduction is adequate. Some of the remarks in the accompanying notes should not be taken without a grain of salt.

—P.L.M.

SCHUBERT. Staenchen (Schwanengesang, no. 4); An den Mond, Op. 57, no. 3; **Lotte Lehmann** (soprano) with **Paul Ulanowsky** (piano). Victor 7" disc 49-1699, 95c.

▲ Schubert's "Serenade" is well-known and so often maltreated that it is easy to forget how beautiful it can be. My memory runs back to Elena Gerhardt with Coenraad Bos at the piano (the pianist is perhaps more important than the singer in this piece) and my sudden realization that this serenader played a guitar and sung lightly as well as passionately. Having heard it done in that spirit, I am afraid I can never accept the ponderousness of Lehmann's performance here. Unhappily, too, she is not in good vocal form, and the whole thing sounds more like a duty than a labor of love. The "turnover," however, is something else again. This brooding little song, with its curiously abbreviated middle section, is typical of a long line of apostrophies to the moon that came from the pen of Schubert. This time the lover is dreaming of the happiness he has lost, and he asks the moon to veil her light and to weep along with him. This is the Lehmann we like to remember. The tone quality is rich, the projection of the song convincingly impassioned. The recording is good. Incidentally, the poet's name is incorrect as given on the label — this text is by Höltz, not Goethe.

—P.L.M.

SONG RECITAL: Psyché (Paladilhe); L'Enamourée; Infidélité (Hahn); La Vie Antérieure (Duparc); Die Zeitlose; Wozu noch, Mädchen; Du meines Herzens Kronelein (Strauss); **Lotte Lehmann** (soprano) with **Paul Ulanowsky** (piano). Victor WDM-1342, three 7" discs, \$3.35.

MME. LEHMANN has here devised a program to surprise her admirers. This is not, however, her first venture into French: before the war she gave us Hahn's "D'une prison" (Victor 1927, withdrawn). At the time I remarked in my review that her French diction was surprisingly clear. The same may be said again, though I am afraid it has slipped a little farther away from the Parisian. And I do not feel that any of the songs included here quite match the effectiveness of that earlier effort, though several of them show her to advantage. Her singing of "Psyché" is too fussy for my taste, but then so is the much admired one by Maggie Teyte (in Victor M-895). So far as I know, no one has matched the baritone Endrèze, who had the benefit of accompaniment by Hahn (Pathé PG 88). "L'Enamourée" appears for the first time on the American lists, though I note that the French Pathé catalogue has it by the same combination of Endrèze and Hahn (Pathé PG 89). This is the best of Lehmann's French performances in this set; she meets nicely the demands of its warm lyric lines. "Infidélité" is equally well sung, but it lacks the air of numb disillusionment that made the Frijs recording so poignant (Victor M-189). "La Vie Antérieure" must be written off with Lehmann's failures; it is simply too big for the present state of her vocal resources. Here we must recall the superb performance of Panzéra (Victor 18051). The three Strauss songs are fresh, unspoiled and effective. Her singing of them must rank with the best things she has done in recent years, though "Wozu noch, Mädchen" does not succeed in being quite as intimate as she intends. The recordings, on the whole, is good, though as usual the balance is thrown too much in favor of the singer. In "Psyché" I was disturbed by a vibraphone effect in the piano, but the other songs are better in this respect.

—P.L.M.

STRAVINSKY: Mass; **Igor Stravinsky** conducting a double wind quartet and a chorus of men and boys directed by **Warren Foley**. RCA Victor 45 rpm set WDM-1349, three discs, \$3.52.

ROBERT CRAFT, a brilliant, young conductor of Stravinsky's works and the author of the program notes for this set, remarks that "the attitude, the spirit of Flemish composers to sacred music is shared by Stravinsky and preferred to the

great Renaissance Italians, Baroque composers, Bach, and Palestrina."

To be sure, there is a palpable similarity in the leanness of this Mass's sonorities and harmonies and the simplicity of its expression to the music for sacred services by the Flemish composers whose writings I am familiar with. Where this new score does not convince me, and where the similarity between it and the work of the Flemish masters that I know ends, is in the fitting of music and text. Though there are a good many moments of musical interest in Stravinsky's work, I did not accept the music as amplifying the expression of the text.

The performance of these discs is a surprisingly good one. I say surprising, because the first time I heard this group in the American premiere of the "Mass" (Town Hall, New York, February 26, 1949), the chorus—articularly the boys—performed its duties with rhythmic stiffness and with many lapses from pitch. Familiar with the piece and the absence of an audience apparently has helped the boys to do their best work, though there are still lapses of pitch.

The recording is good except for some muddiness of sound in certain loud passages. The surfaces are smooth.

—C.J.L.

TRADITIONAL: Lourdes Pilgrim's Hymn; O Lord, I am not worthy; RCA Victor Chorale, conducted by Robert Shaw. Victor disc 49-0813, 95c.

▲ Mr. Shaw's Chorale here turns its attention to Catholic hymnody, to which they bring their familiar suavity and precision. Not the least of their virtues is the admirable clarity with which every word comes through. The "Lourdes Pilgrims' Hymn" is a lovely old melody, here arranged tastefully and effectively. Both it and its companion are excellently recorded.

—P.L.M.

PLEASURE DOME: An Audible Anthology of Modern Poetry; edited by Lloyd Frankenberg; 26 selections read by the creators: T. S. Eliot; Marianne Moore; E. E. Cummings; William Carlos Williams; Ogden Nash; W. H. Auden; Dylan Thomas; Elizabeth Bishop. Columbia LP disc ML 4259, \$4.95.

HERE is a modern anthology which, unlike many such in other fields, has had the wit to include some of the moderns most likely to succeed in becoming ancients. The idea, much beloved by aestheti-

cians, that the import of a man's work cannot even begin to emerge until his relatives are receiving condolences, has always struck me as more compact of historical coincidence than historical inevitability. It is, perhaps, a superstition, an old professors' tale traceable to the historical paucity of popularizers of the calibre of Lloyd Frankenberg, the editor of this splendid anthology. His record is not a hymn to a coterie, nor a Roman holiday of his own tastes, but a civil job of introduction in which it is assumed both parties are worthy. He assumes—heretically perhaps—that a coterie need not stay that way. A minor poet may even be a wallflower who, though knowing he cannot grow without going to bigger parties, has nonetheless no overwhelming talent for getting invited to them. Briefly, this record helps him put his best metrical feet forward. If those who think poetry lies buried in Stratford or in the Abbey with Kipling or, worse, that it never really lived, will but lend half an ear to this group of poems, it could be Christmas all

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year around, with a mutual exchange of gifts. To unmix these metaphors, T. S. Eliot could give them more and badly needed wit; they could give Eliot, in time, badly needed blood. It will be an eternal loss if so witty a rose as Eliot withers in its own hothouse or languishes on the deserts where few men abide. I take it, that Mr. Frankenberg addresses this introduction to the people, who have it within their power of development to give a warmer hue to the "Waste Land" and guts to the "Hollow" Men. In very literate notes, the editor describes mechanical difficulties of collation. One of these may account for the fact that, to me, a better Eliot selection could have been made. I am one who believes Eliot's genius is for analysis, not synthesis. A passage from Part I of "The Waste Land" would have been far more Serviceable (in the Robert W. sense) than the faintly snobbish Part II passage included here. Still the total approach is broad. It includes, for example, Ogden Nash's "So Pensive" and its parody of Eliot:

"This is the morbid moment,
This is the ebony hour . . ."

as well as Nash's fine religious poem "The Hunter." Nash of course needs no introduction, but my other favorite modern, the British Dylan Thomas, is something of a stranger here himself, and I think many will be pleased to meet him in this record. Only Thomas seems to read his rich verse as beautifully as a good actor might. Nash, Eliot, Tuden and in a way, Mariane Moore, come off fairly well as reciters. But e.e. cummings' frail, hoity-toity delivery is hardly the best advocate for his savage satire. Nor do the nasal deliveries of Williams and Elizabeth Bishop make the most procreant cradle for the taut, fragile verse they bring to earth. One might argue, that for poets to read their own verse as if they had never seen it before has undreamt-of advantages in evocation as well as public relations. That is, it may be reassuring that Mr. Williams sounds just like the pediatrician around the corner, while Miss Bishop, for all her goddess-like art, sounds very like one's self reciting "Prospice" at Commencement. On the whole, I prefer poetry — even the atonal sort — to be read in the proud, boundaryless manner of Dylan Thomas. Notwithstanding points of cavil, "Pleasure Dome" steers a noble course between the obscure winds and the platitudinous seas. In it, Mr. Frankenberg has a stately antho-

logy decreed, and he will surely welcome many wayfarers to the delights of Xanadu (I don't want to marry Mr. Frankenberg, but I do have a fraternity ring kicking around somewhere). — Robert D. Olson

In The Popular Vein

Enzo Archetti

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes — Complete Score (Jule Styne): Carol Channing, Yvonne Adair, Jack McCauley, Eric Bortherson, George S. Irving, and members of the original cast with orchestra and chorus under the direction of Milton Rosenstock; Columbia ML-4290.

● Another "First" for Columbia. Musically, this one doesn't measure up to "South Pacific" and "Kiss Me, Kate." Somewhat on the rowdy-ish side, it is interesting more for its slightly amoral lyrics than its music. Except for "Diamonds Are A Girl's Best Friend" there is no tune which stands out as particularly original. The overture, which runs through every one of them in the show, is a good sampler. The musical is performed with relish, and the recording is excellent.

Songs By Sinatra. Vol. 1: Frank Sinatra, with Orchestra under the direction of Axel Stordahl; Columbia CL-6087.

● Eight samples by that keen showman with the singularly appealing voice — Frank Sinatra. Represented are such composers as Gershwin, Kern, Arlen, Porter, and Berlin. The refreshingly simple styling makes the familiar tunes like new experiences. Columbia has transcribed them to LP with skill. The "Volume 1" is significant: it means we can look forward to another pleasing collection.

Woody Herman and His Woodchoppers: Columbia CL-6092.

● This famous "band within a band" was motivated by the same desire that brought about the creation of other small jazz groups like Benny Goodman's Sextet or Duke Ellington's various units: the desire to play jazz pure and simple, for the sheer joy of playing, for the sake of the music itself rather than for some utilitarian purpose like dancing, singing, or entertaining. Like all such units, their personnel is the backbone of the larger orchestra. The Woodchoppers consist of Woody Herman,

clarinet;
man, trumpet;
Phillips,
Billy Bauer,
Don Laney,
Joe Monaghan,
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clarinet; Red Norvo, vibes; Sonny Berman, trumpet; Bill Harris, trombone; Joe Phillips, tenor sax; Jimmy Rowles, piano; Billy Bauer, guitar; Chubby Jackson, bass; Don Lamond, drums. Charles Jagelka and Joe Mondragon sub on guitar and bass, respectively, in two of the members. All lovers of jazz know that they are the heart of the Herman Herd.

The instrumentation is unique and in this collection the Woodchoppers cut loose a brand of jazz which is a joy to all who "know" what's good. The tunes are all "head arrangements" which means that the ensemble passages are planned just before being recorded while the solos are "off the cuff" creations. That's the formula which produces the kind of jazz which makes history.

Includes her "Some Day, Sweetheart," "I Surrender, Dear," "Four Men On A Horse," "Lost Weekend," "Nero's Conception," "Igor," "Steps," and "Pam." The transfer to LP is excellent.

Count Basie Dance Parade: Columbia CL-6079. **Harry James Dance Parade:** Columbia CL-6088.

● These are two in an LP series called "Dance Parade" which so far numbers 14. On them Columbia has collected some of the best releases of 13 popular orchestras. The general title is misleading as only in some instances is the music played for dance purposes. The two listed above, for instance, contain more jazz for listening than music for dancing. Actually, both contain excellent collections of some of the Bands' best arrangements which effectively sum up the essence of their style. The discs are generously sprinkled with the original works of both band leaders. The recording quality is generally good.

Tommy Dorsey Plays Cole Porter; Victor WP-263. **Vaughn Monroe Plays Victor Herbert;** Victor WP-264. **Freddy Martin Plays Jerome Kern;** Victor WP-265. **Sammy Kaye Plays Irving Berlin;** Victor WP-266. **Tex Beneke Plays Hoagy Carmichael;** Victor WP-267. **Ralph Flanagan Plays Rodgers and Hammerstein II;** Victor WP-268. **Claude Thornhill Plays George Gershwin;** Victor WP-269. **Wayne King Plays Johann Strauss;** Victor WP-270. **Ray McKinley Plays Rodgers and Hart;** Victor WP-271. **Larry Green Plays Vincent Youmans;** Victor WP-272. **Ersine Hawkins Plays W. C. Handy;** Victor WP-273. **Charles Ventura Plays Duke Ellington;** Victor WP-274. **Spade Cooley Plays Billy Hill;**

Victor WP-275. Miguelito Valdés Plays Ernesto Lecuona; Victor WP-276. **Spike Jones Plays the Charleston;** Victor WP-277.

● Victor has its own dance parade, issued practically simultaneously with Columbia's. 15 albums of three records each with the best of its name bands playing music "designed for dancing." Victor has departed from the usual by having each band play music by one composer (except in Spike Jones's case) and in nearly every instance the combination was chosen because of earlier successes with just such combinations. Evidently there is a special affinity between these dance band leaders and the various composers of their choice for the results are felicitous if not always sensational.

Victor also introduced a new twist for reviewers with this release. A special album containing one 45 disc only from each of the 15 album was sent for review. Presumably, the choices represent the best of each collection. Admittedly, they are good and Victor has maintained its purpose to present "dance" music much more consistently than did Columbia. In one or two instances the team-up seems incongruous — for example the Ventura-Elington combination — but the results are generally good as dance music. The recordings on these 45's are above reproach. Each of the sets is also available on standard shellac.

The Third Man Theme and Poet and Peasant Rumbature: Irving Fields Trio; Victor 47-3222 or 20-3698. **The Third Man Theme and Come Into My Heart:** Hugo Winterhalter and His Orchestra and Choir; Columbia 38706.

● Though neither has the benefit of the zither, both these versions of Anton Karas' theme music for the picture "The Third Man" rate. Both conceptions are original but neither is as eerie as Karas' own performance.

The rumba version of themes from the "Poet and Peasant Overture" is diverting.

Music! Music! Music! and The Wedding Samba: Mickey Katz and His Orchestra. Vocals by Jack Hilliard; Capitol 862. **Music! Music! Music! and Wilhelmina:** Freddy Martin and His Orchestra. Vocals by Mary Griffin and The Martin Men; Victor 47-3217 or 20-3693.

● Two sprightly versions of that monotonous ditty which so well epitomizes the character of the juke box. The samba is a

disappointment after last month's fine performance by Chuy Reyes. "Wilhelmina" is a luke-warm bit from the picture "Wabash Avenue." As recordings both are good but Martin's has the edge for arrangements.

Kiss Me and Sweet Promisess and Good Intentions: Lisa Kirk, with Orchestra conducted by Henri René; Victor 47-3237 or 20-3704. **Dearie and Just A Girl That Men Forget:** Lisa Kirk and Fran Warren, with Orchestra conducted by Henri René; Victor 47-3220 or 20-3696. **Have You Ever Been Lonely? and You Missed the Boat:** Lisa Kirk and Don Cornell, with Orchestra conducted by Henri René; Victor 47-3218 or 3694.

● These songs are not of much consequence but the appealing voice and style of Lisa Kirk make these releases noteworthy. Nice work. Nice recordings, too.

Honky Tonk Piano: Marvin Ash, "Professor" Lou Busch, and Ray Turner, with Rhythm Accompaniment; Capitol Album CC-187, 3-10" discs.

● Honky tonk: father or son of ragtime—it doesn't matter, it's background is unrefined, seedly, even immoral. It doesn't matter. It's exciting music. Music with a pulse. It is felt as much as it is heard.

Capitol has assembled three modern exponents of honky tonk, some classic rags, a few new conceptions of it, and a small unidentified rhythm section to come up with an album that is a jazz delight. The three pianists have a real feeling for the music. Capitol can be proud of this album. As a recording, it's life-like quality is marvelous.

Verdi's "Falstaff"

(Continued from page 250)

the singers are obviously placed behind the orchestra, with the result that the orchestra is heard to best advantage. If on occasion the orchestra tends to swamp a singer this is preferred to having the singer glued to a microphone and out of perspective with the orchestras as in the older Columbia "Falstaff" set.

To return to the Capitol-Telefunken set of excerpts, featuring Stabile and others. Though these are valuable mementos of a great singing actor, there is much to be said in favor of the same scenes in the complete recording of the opera, as I have already outlined. Unfortunately, this set

is hopelessly mixed up in labellings and sequence. Sides 1 and 6 contain respectively the monologues, "L'onore, ladri!" and "Ehi! Taverniere." Sides 4 and 5, marked "Quando'ero paggio," contain instead the opening of Act II, Scene 1 in the Inn between Falstaff and Dame Quickly. And sides 2 and 3, incorrectly labelled "Prima di tutto," contains the continuation of the same scene after Dame Quickly's exit, beginning with the entrance of Ford and continuing to Falstaff's exit to change his clothes. Ford's monologue is not given. Thus, if one acquires this set, for full enjoyment and comprehension of its musical material, one should place sides 1, 4, and 5 on the changer first, and sides 2, 3, and 6 afterwards. Falstaff's famous aria, "Quand'ero paggio" is not in the recording.

Though Stabile's voice seems rather light for the role of Falstaff, his abilities as a singing actor are preceptible and there is much subtlety in his handling of the text. As Alec Robertson pointed out, "what character he gets into that one word 'No!'" in the "Honour" monologue.

To sum up, the new Cetra-Soria recording offers a performance which, in my estimation, is notable for characterization, mood, and balance. It is a better performance than most of the ones I have heard in opera houses in this country.

VERDI: Falstaff (Complete Opera); Giuseppe Taddei (Falstaff); Saturno Meletti (Ford); Emilio Renzi (Fenton); Gino Del Signore (Dr. Caius); Giuseppe Nessi (Bardolph); Cristiano Dalla Mag-nus (Pistol); Rosanna Carteri (Alice Ford); Lina Pagliughi (Nanetta); Anna Maria Canali (Meg Page); Amalia Pini (Dame Quickly); Orchestra and Chorus of Radio Italiana, conducted by Mario Rossi. Cetra-Soria set 1207, 3 LP discs. \$17.85.

...

VERDI: Falstaff — Excerpts: L'onore, ladri! Act I, Sc. I; Scene between Falstaff and Ford, Act II, Sc. I; Scene between Falstaff and Dame Quickly, Act II, Sc. I; Ehi! Taverniere, Act III, Sc. 1; **Mariano Stabile (Falstaff); Afro Poli (Ford); Vittoria Palombini (Dame Quickly); Giuseppe Nessi (Bardolph); Luciano Donaggio (Pistol); La Scala Orchestra, conducted by Alberto Erede. Capitol-Telefunken set RCM-8073, three 45 rpm discs, price \$3.35.**

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